

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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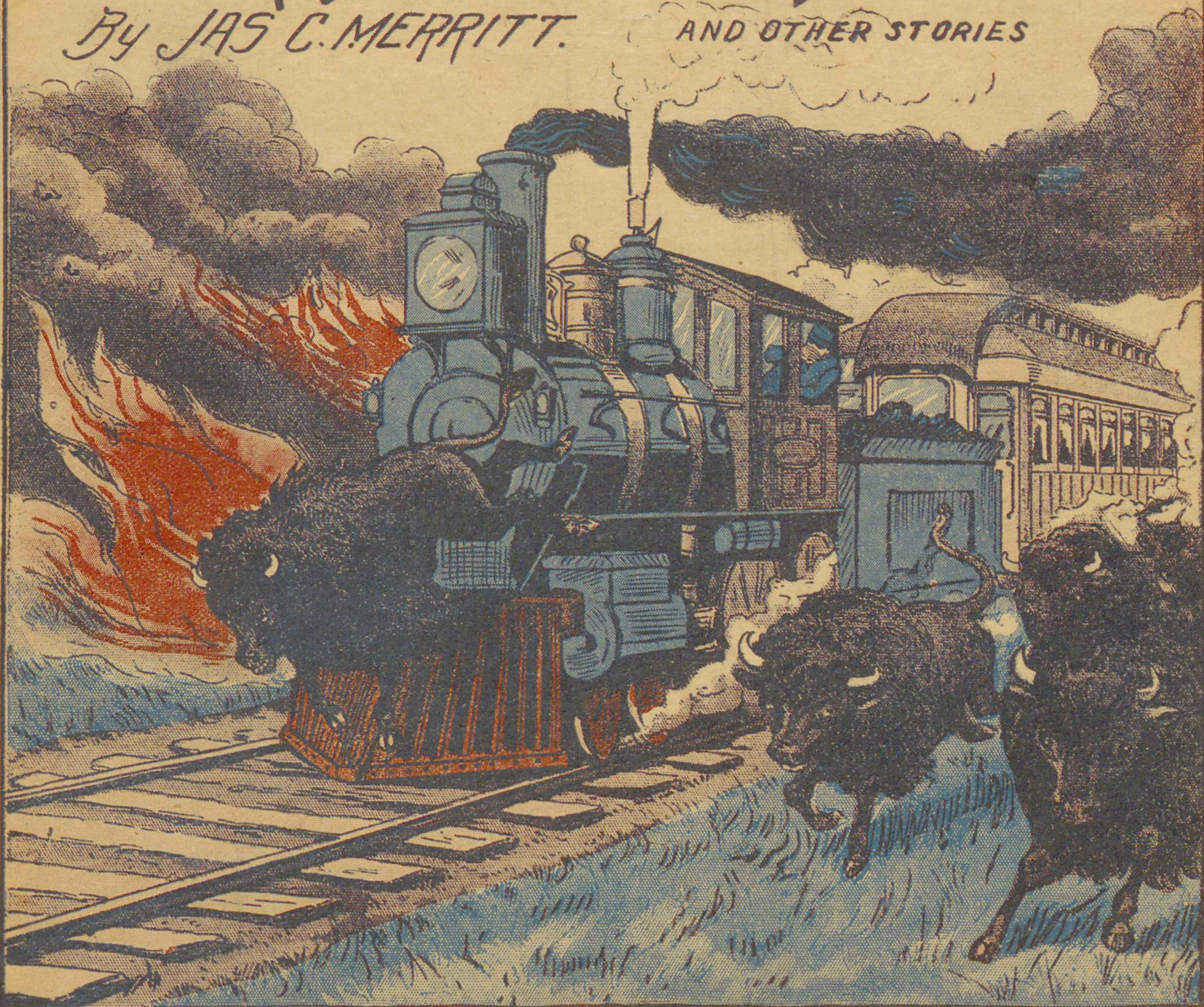
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 21, 1917.

Price SIX Cents.

LITTLE MAC, THE BOY ENGINEER; OR, BOUND TO DO HIS BEST.

By JAS C. MERRITT.

AND OTHER STORIES



A shock, a creak, a groaning and straining, a momentary pause and then the engine once more dashes on its furious way. The cow-catcher had struck the foremost buffalo, and had dashed it mangled and lifeless to one side.

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LITTLE MAC, THE BOY ENGINEER

—OR—

BOUND TO DO HIS BEST

By JAS. C. MERRITT

CHAPTER I.

THE WAIF OF THE TRACK.

"By heavens, Bill, there's a woman on the track!"

It was Jack Thompson, the fireman of the "Little Mac," a well-known locomotive on the Morris and Essex Railroad of New Jersey, who uttered the exclamation.

Bill Norton, the engineer, instantly reversed the lever and gave the danger signal, but it was too late!

The iron monster passed over the prostrate form, there was a subdued groan and all was over.

As soon as the train was stopped the engineer and fireman leaped off the cab into the snow and hurried to the spot where lay the remains of the unfortunate woman.

It was a wild, dark night in the month of February, of the year 1857, and the place the open stretch of country lying between Hoboken and Bergen.

It had been snowing for several hours, and the ground was covered as with a white mantle to the depths of several inches.

"By jinks!" exclaimed Jack, bending over the dead body so that the rays of the lantern, which he carried in his hand, could illuminate the still, cold features happily undisfigured. "What a pity, and such a pretty gal, too, and so young looking. She must have been trying to walk to the city and been overcome by the storm."

"Might be," muttered Bill, thoughtfully, "and then again it mightn't. What could bring such a girl as that out in a night like this? There's something in the way she was lying on the track an' bein' so quiet-like, never trying to get out of the way like as if——"

"It looks that way, Jack, and—hullo! what's that?"

The sound which had caused the exclamation was the wail of an infant.

"I'd swear it's a kid!" cried Jack.

"So it is!" said Bill, picking up a male child from where it lay beneath the snow.

The tiny thing, scarcely more than a month old, checked its tears when pressed to the warm, manly bosom of the engineer, and, looking at him with great, big, staring eyes, commenced to cry and laugh.

"Do you know, Jack, I see how it is. That unfortunate woman, for some reason or other, wanted to take her life and that of her child. It was sinful to do so, and maybe that's the reason heaven suffered her to be killed; but the pretty babe is unhurt and I'm going to take him home to Mary."

By this time a murmur of passengers, alarmed at the stoppage of the train in the open country, issued from the cars to learn the cause.

They now gathered around the fireman and engineer and overwhelmed them with questions about the sad occurrence.

With their aid the body of the dead girl was carried into one of the cars and reverently covered with a shawl.

Bill, for the present, resigned the care of the "waif of the track" to one of the lady passengers and returned with Jack to his post of duty.

When the train arrived at Hoboken, and the occurrence was reported to the superintendent, the police took charge of the corpse, and would also have taken charge of the infant but for a number of claimants that protested against it.

First of these was Bill Norton, the engineer, who undoubtedly had the most right to it, having found the child.

Then Jack Thompson liked to add it to his already rather large family; the lady who had taken care of the infant and who was a wealthy, childless widow, earnestly desired to adopt it; several other passengers also declared their willingness to receive the little stranger, and finally the police put in their claim.

"I'll tell yer what!" exclaimed Jack, as the matter was being discussed in the waiting-room of the depot; "put the youngster on the table there as the stake, an' we'll all draw lots. Whoever draws the prize shall have him."

Bill began to protest against this arrangement, but he was overborne by the ejaculations of the others, who all declared to let the possession of the child rest with fate.

The babe was accordingly placed on the table, and kept his eyes fixed constantly on the man who went around with the paper ballots in a hat, as if it knew and understood what was going on.

Shout after shout of laughter went up from the throng as each aspirant in turn drew forth a slip, and, with a lugubrious countenance, announced that it was a blank.

The choice was finally narrowed down between the engineer and the police. The laughter now gave way to serious interest. It was now the question whether the child should be reared as the adopted son of a man whose kind and tender heart and generous soul were known to all, or whether it should be consigned to all the horrors, real and imagined, of a pauper's life in the almshouse.

A death-like silence prevailed as Bill tremblingly drew forth the slip of paper.

"Hurrah!" ejaculated he as he opened it. "I've drawn the prize, and the child is mine!"

He caught the wondering infant in his arms and amid the congratulations and plaudits of the spectators rushed excitedly out of the depot toward his home, which was a short distance off.

Bill Norton was a fine young fellow of twenty-five or twenty-six years out, a thorough engineer and one of the most genial men alive. Three years ago he had married pretty Mary Hopkins, a girl in every way worthy of him, and though as yet no children had blessed their union there wasn't a happier couple than they in all the world.

In spite of the snow storm which still raged furiously, Mary was at the door awaiting her husband's coming, and was much surprised at the mysterious manner in which he kept something huddled up under his great coat.

"What is it, Bill?" asked she as she followed him into the kitchen, where a bright fire sparkled briskly on the hearth and a table was neatly spread for supper.

"I've brought you a present, Mary," said he, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"A present?" ejaculated she.

"Yes; guess what it is."

"You know I'm poor at guessing," exclaimed she, almost dying with curiosity. "Do tell me what it is."

"Well, it is this," said he, taking the babe from under his coat and bouncing it up and down.

"A child! A real angel!" enthusiastically exclaimed his wife, taking the waif from his arms and almost smothering it with kisses. "Oh, where did you get it from?"

He related to her what had occurred on his homeward trip.

"Poor woman!" sympathetically exclaimed she. "What could have induced her to choose such a horrible death? Can't I view the body?"

"Yes; there will very likely be an inquest held over it to-morrow, and you may be present."

"But I'm so glad," continued she, "that you drew the prize. How terrible it would have been to have the dear thing grow up as a pauper. We'll adopt him, won't we? And bring him up as our own."

"We will; that is, if no one claims him, which I hope will be the case. Do you know, Mary, I've already thought of a name for him."

"You have? What is it?"

"I'm going to name him after my favorite engine."

"Little Mac?"

"Exactly; and now let's have some supper, for I'm as hungry as a wolf."

The next day Mary, accompanied by her husband and the child, went to view the body of the dead girl.

It was lying in the morgue on a marble slab. The attendants had washed and dressed the corpse and thus concealed from view the mutilations of the body where it had been struck by the wheels of the engine.

Calmly and peacefully lay the girl whom heaven knows what wrongs had driven to death.

With tears in her eyes and quivering lips, Mary stooped down over the inanimate form and pressed a kiss on the passive features.

Then turning to an attendant, she huskily asked:

"Was there nothing found on her by which she could be identified?"

"Nothing, ma'am," replied he, respectfully, "but a gold ring, and that the coroner took when he was here this morning."

"Have arrangements been made for holding the inquest?" asked Bill.

"Yes, sir. It's going to be held at twelve o'clock to-day."

As it was near that time, they decided to await it.

Promptly at noon the coroner appeared and a jury was impaneled.

The inquest was very short, consisting only of the testimony of Bill and Jack Thompson, who had been summoned, and made his appearance at the proper time.

The jury, in doubt as to the fact of suicide, brought in a verdict of accidental death, acquitting the railroad of all blame in the affair.

After the inquest was over, Mary approached the coroner and begged him to give her the ring as a means by which the child might, perhaps, in the future identify his relations.

The coroner at once handed her the article.

It was a wedding ring, a plain band of gold, on the inner surface of which were engraved the words:

"From James to Effie."

Mary carefully placed the ring in her pocket and subsequently returned home.

The next day the newspapers contained an account of the affair, and advertisements were also inserted, but when, after the lapse of several days, no one appeared either to claim the dead mother or the living child, the coroner ordered the corpse to be buried in a pauper's grave.

But Mary would not suffer this, and though their means were little, yet at her request Bill had the body interred in the churchyard, and over the mound placed a simple tombstone bearing the single word:

"EFFIE."

CHAPTER II.

SNOOKSY.

We pass over sixteen years of time, and now introduce Mac as a fine, healthy, hearty-looking lad, the very picture of his mother, as Mary Norton affirmed, over and over again.

He grew up as the son of his foster parents until he reached the age of fourteen.

Then Mary led him to his mother's grave, gave him his mother's wedding ring and exhorted him to visit the grass-covered mound daily, and never to forget her who gave him birth.

The revelation was a very painful one to him, for he dearly loved those whom he had looked upon as his parents, and more especially was he devoted to little Effie, the only child of these worthy people, born two years after the happening of the events depicted in our first chapter, and who had been named after his mother.

"Then Effie is no longer my sister?" asked he, while his lip quivered and tears stole silently down his cheeks.

"Not in fact," replied Mary, gently; "but she will ever be a sister to you."

After that he became rather grave and restrained, and, though in the highest class in the public schools, flatly refused to go to college when Bill broached the subject to him.

"I have no right," said he, "to be a burden to you, and I am old enough to support myself. Now that Jack Thompson is laid up with a sore leg, why can't I go with you on your engine and tend to the fires? You could, at the same time, teach me all about the locomotive, so that some day I can become an engineer."

"So you want to become an engineer?" asked Bill, while a bright smile overspread his ruddy countenance.

"It is the wish of my heart," replied the boy.

"Give me your hand on that!" exclaimed Bill. "I always thought there was the making of a good engineer in you; but Mary always wanted you to go to college and get book-learning. Now that the old engine's been condemned, and I'm to start with a new one to-morrow, you shall go along with me and I won't hear a word to the contrary from anybody."

He looked rather fiercely at his wife as if he expected some opposition from that quarter.

"If Mac wants to be an engineer, of course I don't object," said she; "and only hope he'll have as good luck as you've had. But what's the name of the new engine, Bill?"

"The 'Little Mac,' of course," replied he. "I wouldn't drive an engine with another name."

"Hurrah!" cried Effie, clapping her hands with delight. "Little Mac will be the engineer of the 'Little Mac.' Won't that be splendid?"

Thus it was that our hero, thus early in life, assumed an avocation hazardous at all times, and which was to be especially exciting and adventurous to him.

Bill was very painstaking and conscientious with his apprenticeship, as he called him, and kept him tending to the fires and oiling the engine for a good many months in spite of the boy's secret desire to handle the lever, and Mary's remonstrances and Effie's ejaculations, when the lad would come home, utterly tired out and exhausted by his arduous labors and covered with grime and soot.

Jack Thompson, after his recovery, had been placed on another engine, and Mac now faithfully performed all the service previously attended to by the former, and received the same pay from the company, all of which he gave to his foster-mother to aid in the support of the family.

He had been two years on the engine, and was thoroughly conversant with every part of the mechanism, before Bill allowed him to make his first trip.

That was a day of triumph for him, and when after a run, which was the quickest on record, the train drew up at the station in Hoboken, he, with beating heart and flushed cheek, hastened to inform his foster-mother and Effie of his success.

He received their congratulations, and then started back to where the engine was standing with steam up ready to make the return trip.

He had not, however, proceeded far up the street when he was stopped by the most eccentric specimen of humanity he had ever beheld in his life.

It was a boy, who, though in fact several years younger than he, had the appearance of a man prematurely old. He was diminutive in stature, barefoot, clad in a pair of tattered breeches, wore a rather dirty white vest, a blue army coat ornamented with big, brass buttons and much too large for him, a slouch hat perched at an angle on his frowsy head and through the many holes of which protruded his sandy-hued hair; his face was pale and haggard, but his small, gray eyes twinkled and sparkled like twin stars.

"Be you the feller what runs with Little Mac?" piped this curious bundle of rags and bones, for there was but little flesh on him.

"I am," replied Mac. "And who are you?"

"I'm Snooksy."

"That's a funny name."

"Can't help it; it's the best I've got. But I want ter tell yer somethin'."

He lowered his voice and looked about rather anxiously as though he feared to be overheard.

"Well, what is it? You must tell me quickly, for I haven't got much time to spare. The train'll be off in five minutes."

"Dat ingine's got ter be stopped!" hurriedly whispered Snooksy.

"Why?"

"'Cause Velveteen George an' his gang's goin' ter wreck it out on the curve. I heard 'em talk all about it. They didn't mind me 'cause they thought I'd stand in with 'em, like I've done all along. But I won't!" continued he, excitedly, his voice pitched at a shrill whistle, his eyes sparkling with rage and his fingers nervously clutching and unclutching. "I won't; not after they've starved and beat me. See here!"

The boy bared his bosom and showed that it was all black and blue from blows, and striped with livid scars made by a cruel lash.

This was indeed startling intelligence. Mac had heard of trains being wrecked by means of obstructions placed across the track, and that there were a gang of desperadoes hidden in the pine forests in the upper portion of New Jersey that made this their business.

"Come!" said he, grasping his strange companion by the hand, "there's not a moment to lose. The train must be stopped!"

But when they arrived at the depot it was only to learn that the train had left a couple of minutes before. Bill evidently thinking that Mac would remain at home, had started off without him, taking another fireman along with him. What was to be done?

Night was coming on, together with heavy clouds that would shut out all light from the moon and stars.

The place where the fearful crime was to be committed was in the midst of a deep forest, and before the train would reach a station which could be telegraphed to.

Besides, Mac was so excited that he never thought of informing the superintendent of the danger, but seeing a locomotive standing on a side track, ready to be attached to a train, he jumped into the cab, followed by Snooksy, and turning on a full head of steam, was off like the wind, to the great astonishment of the people around the depot.

On and on thundered the locomotive.

Snooksy, at Mac's direction, kept piling coal into the red-hot furnace.

The pressure of the steam, as indicated by the gauge, rose higher and higher.

The safety valve shrieked forth the signal of danger, but the intrepid boys paid no heed to it.

Faster and faster revolved the wheels; the huge monster groaned and quivered like a human being in agony; they were speeding along the rails at the rate of sixty miles an hour.

"If she only doesn't blow up!" muttered Mac, as he opened the lever still wider and increased the rate by five miles.

Now they were nearing the forest, and peering out of the cab Mac beheld the train about a hundred yards ahead of him.

He blew a shrill signal.

They evidently heard and understood it, for it was answered by the whistle for "down brakes!"

But it was too late.

Before the train could be brought to a halt the locomotive ran against a number of bags chained to the tracks and amid the shouts and cries of the affrighted passengers the train bounded off the track and lay on the ground a mass of ruin.

CHAPTER III.

THE MANIAC.

"My heavens, we're too late!" gasped Mac, as he beheld the direful catastrophe.

For a moment he felt inclined to faint dead away, but re-

covering himself he once more grasped the lever and, reducing the headway, slowly steamed up to the spot.

Bringing the locomotive to a standstill he and Snooksy sprang from the cab and hastened to see what damage had been done.

The latter was, indeed, fearful lest the gang whom he had left should be around, and, discovering him, kill him; but for this there was no cause, as the desperadoes were frightened away by the signal Mac had given.

Two of the cars were still standing on the track, the coupling between them and the rest of the train having fortunately broken, the other two cars and the locomotive were lying on their sides.

Mac's first care was for Bill, whom he found lying on the ground beside his engine and groaning with pain.

"Are you much hurt, father?" asked he, addressing him by the title he always used, even after Mrs. Norton's revelation.

"Mac, you here?" groaned the wounded man. "Thank heaven you were not on the train! I fear my legs are broken."

With the assistance of several of the passengers, who were unhurt, Mac raised him from the ground and carried him into one of the cars.

It was found that none of the passengers had been killed, and though most all who had been in the overturned cars were bruised and wounded, yet it seemed that Bill was about the most seriously hurt.

By the aid of several stout ropes our hero fastened the cars remaining on the track to the cowcatcher of his locomotive, and was looking about for Snooksy, preparatory to returning to Hoboken, when by the light of the moon, which had suddenly broke through a rift in the clouds, he beheld him struggling in the arms of a thick-set, burly man, clad in a coat of velveteen.

Instantly the thought crossed his mind that this man was the leader of the train wreckers, spoken of by Snooksy, and that he had mingled among the passengers to learn who had been the cause of the partial defeat of his infamous plans.

"You young skunk," hissed the man, catching Snooksy around the thorax. "So it's you who's been squealing, eh? Well, I'll wager you'll never squeal again."

He tightened his grasp on the boy's neck until the latter's face became purple, and his eyes bulged out from their sockets.

It was his evident intention to choke him to death, and he would probably have done so had not Mac suddenly sprang toward the ruffian and given him a blow full in the face that caused him to let go his hold on the boy and stagger backward.

Snooksy, recovering his breath, immediately dashed away, too frightened to remain to assist his preserver, and the man, with a fearful oath, turned to avenge himself on his assailant, when he caught sight of Mac's countenance.

He halted abruptly, and glancing sharply at the boy, asked:

"Who are you?"

"No matter who I am," retorted he; "I know you. You are Velveteen George, and you shan't escape from here!"

He was about to raise a cry for help when the man, with an oath, silenced him.

"Be still, you fool!" said he, "and look at that picture."

He drew a miniature out of his pocket as he spoke and handed it to him.

Mac was surprised to find what appeared to be a counterfeit presentment of himself clad in a woman's garb.

"Is that my sister?" asked he, almost involuntarily.

"Keep the picture," hurriedly replied the man, "and ask those with whom you live."

So saying he quickly vanished, leaving our hero holding the portrait in his hand and more than ever mystified.

He had, however, no time now to think over the matter, and putting the miniature into his pocket, got into the locomotive, where he found Snooksy awaiting him, and started the train for the depot.

Meanwhile Velveteen George strode through the forest to his place of rendezvous.

"Ah, ha!" muttered he as he walked along. "At last the hour that I've been so long awaiting has come. Now, my haughty Estelle, I'll show you what it is to cast me out just because I spent a little of that money which is not yours by right. I never believed that that girl had drowned herself, and carried that picture with me everywhere to find some trace of her. To-night I've struck the trail. If there's

anything in looks, that boy is her son, and when I once get him in my power I can make my own terms with you, my proud and haughty Estelle."

He chuckled softly to himself and continued his way in a state of high glee.

Mary received her wounded husband with many ejaculations of grief and alarm, but was greatly comforted by the reassuring words of the physician, who had been hastily summoned, and who promised to bring her husband around all right in the course of a month at the furthest.

The wrecked cars and locomotive were removed to the repair shops and the obstructions taken off the tracks.

The trains now ran regularly again, and when, after a week's time the "Little Mac" was again placed on the track, she was given in charge of our hero in acknowledgment of his bravery and daring at the time of the catastrophe.

Snooksy had been given a home by Mrs. Norton, and put in some of Mac's old clothes.

He now acted as fireman under Mac, and between the two boys a bond of friendship was cemented that was never afterward broken.

The excitement of the first few days caused the incident of the picture to entirely escape Mac's mind; but he remembered it subsequently, and having shown it to his foster-mother, was, to his great surprise, assured that it was the picture of his mother.

He related to her how he had come in possession of it, but from the knowledge which she possessed she could not determine what interest Velveteen George had in the matter.

His disreputable character, however, impressed Mrs. Norton very unfavorably, and she advised Mac to shun the man if ever he came across him again.

The responsibility of his new position soon caused him to think no more of the circumstance for the time being, and he devoted his whole attention to the management of his engine, winning the plaudits both of the officials of the road and the passengers, who were loud in their praises of the boy engineer.

An incident, however, soon afterward occurred, which, though he did not know it at the time, had a great deal to do with the mystery which overhung his birth.

He had just left the station of a small village, situated but a short distance from the Hackensack River, when he felt a tap on his shoulder, and looking around was surprised to see an old man plainly, though respectably dressed standing before him.

The silvery gray hair and beard of the stranger gave him such a venerable appearance that Mac hesitated to tell him that it was against the rule for any passenger to ride in the cab of the engine.

"Excuse me," said the old man, politely. "I'm a friend of the superintendent, and with his permission I've come here to ask you a few questions about your engine, as I am interested in all such matters."

These words entirely disarmed any suspicion that might have arisen in the boy's mind.

"I will answer," said he, deferentially, "to the best of my ability."

"Don't you think," said the man, after a slight pause, "that this engine travels at a very slow rate?"

"No," replied Mac. "It's the fastest engine on the road."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other. "Then why don't they stop running by steam and employ the new power?"

"What new power?" asked the boy.

"Electricity."

"I've heard of that, sir, but it cannot be practically accomplished."

"But I say it can!" replied the old man a little eagerly. "I've done it myself."

Mac looked at him curiously.

"Some old fogey of a scientist," thought he. "I've been troubled with their theories."

"Yes," continued the other, "I've had an engine constructed it yet, but I've got the idea. You see, the friction of the wheels against the rails retards the speed. Now, a thousand miles an hour."

At these words the truth flashed across our hero's mind.

This man was a lunatic, who must have escaped from the asylum in the vicinity of the last station and come into the cab.

The thought caused him some uneasiness, for he was comparatively alone with him, as Snooksy was busy shoveling coal into the furnace.

He determined to humor him until his companion had finished his work.

"That was pretty quick," said he, with a forced smile.

"Not so quick as we could go with my new engine," continued the lunatic, warming up with his subject. "I haven't constructed it yet, but I've got the idea. You see, the friction of the wheels against the rails retards the speed. Now, in my air line I'm going to have the train suspended in midair by means of two mighty opposing magnets, and then with my lightning power I'll travel around the earth in twenty minutes. I ain't quite clear on the subject, for whenever I think of it there's a face that looms up before me and mocks and ridicules me."

"A face," murmured Mac, unconsciously.

"Yes," shrieked the maniac, suddenly becoming furious. "Yours!"

In spite of the terror which overcame our hero as he recognized his perilous position, the thought uppermost in his mind was that this was the second time that his face had affected persons entire strangers to him.

He gave a quick cry of alarm and placed his hand on the lever to shut off the steam, but the maniac was too quick for him, and seizing him by the neck, pulled him away.

"Yes," shrieked the lunatic, "it is your face that prevents the accomplishment of my great work, and you needn't think that I did not recognize it because you've disguised yourself in boy's clothes. You've eluded me thus far, but I've got you now. You shall die now and not mock me any longer!"

In vain the boy screamed and kicked and struggled.

The maniac seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength, and lifting him bodily from the floor held him out of the cab, ready to drop him at any moment to the ground below.

And all this while, with no one to guard the lever, the train was rushing at a headlong speed toward a bridge, where the red flag proclaimed that the draw was open!

CHAPTER IV.

JIMMIE, THE TWISTER.

In the densest portion of the almost impenetrable pine forests that abound in the northern part of New Jersey stood a hut that had formerly belonged to a family of charcoal burners, but which had been deserted by them when the broken roof no longer kept out the rain, the paneless windows afforded no shelter against the wind, and the entire structure, rotten and worm-eaten, seemed likely to topple on their heads.

It was in this deserted and tumble-down condition when Velveteen George and his gang discovered it and determined to make it their headquarters.

For this purpose they artfully contrived to render the interior of the hut safe and habitable, while at the same time leaving the exterior as dilapidated-looking as ever.

A subterranean chamber was also dug, having several different outlets. This was also used to store away their plunder previous to its being secretly conveyed to New York and sold to "fences," and also to serve as a refuge and mode of escape in case they were attacked.

As yet there had been no occasion for this latter purpose, for no one supposed that the broken-down shanty could possibly be inhabited.

When Velveteen George entered the hut on the night of his meeting with Little Mac, he found several of his men sitting around a table drinking whisky and playing cards with a lad about the same age as Snooksy, but better dressed.

The boy held a number of cards in one hand, a cigar in the other, while on the table beside him stood a glass half filled with fiery liquor.

His countenance bore a rakish, devil-may-care expression, sad to behold in one so young, and as he raised his head at the entrance of Velveteen George the likeness between it and that of the latter stamped them at once as father and son.

"Hello, dad!" he sang out. "Got a buster, didn't yer? Oh, I know all about it. The gang's come back all down in the mouth like a pack of whipped curs. Served 'em right, an' you, too. Why the dickens didn't yer let me manage the job? I'll bet I'd a-fixed 'em."

"It'd turned out all right, if that little varmint of a Snooksy hadn't betrayed us."

"So it was Snooksy, eh?" said the young hopeful, putting his cigar between his lips and drawing forth a murderous-looking bowie knife. "Just let me catch hold of the young squealer. I'll skin his hide for him."

"Well, Jimmy," continued his father, "p'raps if I didn't haul in any swag to-night I've found out something that's better both for you and me."

"Yer don't say, dad? What is it?"

"Come to my room, an' I'll tell yer all about it."

The boy arose with alacrity.

"Is it a long story, dad, or a short one?"

"Well, pretty long."

"Then I guess I'll take the bottle and a couple of glasses along with me. Yer know I get dry orfully quick."

He unceremoniously took the black bottle from his companions, and having first drained his glass with all the ease of an old toper took that and another one and followed his father into a side room, which was Velveten George's private apartments, and shared only by his son, whom he loved with that wild, unreasoning devotion often met with in persons of the most depraved character.

"Well, dad," exclaimed Jimmy, when they were alone, "let's have a stiff horn first, and then sling out yer yarn."

He filled the glasses and handed one of them to his paternal relative.

"I'm afraid, Jimmy," said his father, "that you drink more whisky than is good for you."

"Oh, git out," replied the boy. "Didn't yer teach me how ter drink and smoke almost before I could speak. I'm a tough nut, dad, I am, and the only time whisky don't agree with me is when I mix it with water."

His father said no more, and the two having emptied their glasses, Velveten George accepted a cigar and light from his son, and began:

"Yer don't remember yer mother, Jimmy, do yer?"

"Not much. Never knew I had any."

"Well, yer have, an' she's a fine lady, lives in a brown stone house in New York, dresses in silks and diamonds, has her horses and carriages, goes to church on Sunday, and, you bet, is highfalutin' all over."

"Yer don't mean for ter say, dad, that that 'ere woman's your wife?"

"It's a fact, Jimmy."

"And my mother?"

"Exactly."

"Look here, dad, I want none of your foolin' now. Tell me this. Why ain't you getting your stake out of all them fine things, and why ain't I sportin' it on Broadway with a piccadilly collar an' a white necktie, a cane in one hand an' a twenty-five cent cigar in the other, eh? Why am I out here in the woods instead of cutting a shine on the avenue? Why am I drinking tanglefoot whisky instead of champagne? That's what I want to know."

He cocked his hat on one side of his head, elevated the cigar in his mouth at an angle of forty-five degrees, and leaning back in his chair placed his feet on the table.

This attitude struck his father as being so comical that he burst out laughing, and tapping him on the shoulder exclaimed:

"Jimmy, you were born to be a sport, an' I'm going ter put yer into a posish ter cut just the kind of the shine yer talkin' about."

"How are yer going ter do it, dad?"

"Why, make yer mother acknowledge yer."

"And fork over the stamps?"

"Exactly."

"What's the reason you've got ter force her ter do it?"

"Well, yer see, when she married me she was a widow—her husband, in fact, had killed himself. He left a writing, though, telling her as how he'd married another girl, and that she weren't his wife, but the other girl was. Do you understand me?"

"Like a book. Go on."

"He left lots of property an' all that, which, of course, went ter yer mother, pervidin' the other girl wouldn't turn up. There was a picture of the gal found on the breast of the man, an' yer mother gave me the picture and told me to investigate the matter."

"But how'd yer come ter know my mother?"

"Oh, I was secretly married to her afore she married this rich man."

"Then all the time she wasn't his wife at all, either."

"No; that's just the fun of the thing. I was jugged right after marrying her, and sent to States prison for ten years. I managed to escape after a year, though, and came back to find what I've just told you."

"There, dad," interrupted Jimmy at this point, "yer better wet yer whistle 'fore yer go on wid yer yarn. It makes me dry just ter listen ter yer."

Father and son once more drained their glasses, and then the elder continued:

"All I could find out about the gal was that she'd run away from home, and as the river ran near where she lived it was generally believed that she drowned herself. Leastways that's what I reported to yer mother, and she, mighty glad that she had all the money, now took care of me, who was her rightful husband, yer know, and gave me a share of the swag. Well, things went on pretty well till after you were born, when she got high-toned and was converted and all that. She didn't like the idea of having an escaped convict for a husband, and perhaps I did gamble away some of the money and come home drunk once in a while. Finally we had a regular blow-up, and she threatened to betray me to the police if I didn't clear out. That settled the matter, and, of course, I had ter git; but I took you along with me, Jimmy. I wouldn't have left my kid behind for all the money in the world."

The escaped convict's voice trembled somewhat as he uttered these last words, and he cast a wistful, yearning look on his son, as if he would like to clasp him to his bosom.

He controlled his emotion, however, and continued:

"Yer know, Jimmy, since yer were old enough to know anything how I've been traveling around from place to place, and finally joined the gang here. Do yer know why I did so? It was because I never believed that gal was drowned, and that sooner or later I'd hear something of her."

"And yer did ter-night?" asked the boy.

"To-night," exclaimed he, excitedly, "I put my eyes on her son."

Jimmy sprang to his feet with a bound.

"And that son," cried he, "is the true heir of all the money his daddy left. How much is it?"

"Nearly a million, Jimmy."

"Say, dad, I kin see what yer driving at. If we git that boy in our power we can force this high-toned mother of mine to acknowledge you and me, and, what's of more consequence, pony over one-half of the money."

"You're a chip of the old block, Jimmy," admiringly replied his father. "You've hit the nail on the head exactly. We must put up a job on this youngster and rope him in. How'll we do it?"

"Oh, leave that to me; I'll fix it," replied the young hopeful.

"Tain't for nothing they call me Jimmy, the Twister."

CHAPTER V.

THE ENCOUNTER ON THE RIVER.

It will be remembered that Snooksy was in the cab of the "Little Mac," but being engaged in the important duty of filling the furnace, could not come to the rescue of the boy engineer before the maniac was holding the latter out of the cab.

It was at this juncture that Snooksy, with uplifted shovel, struck the lunatic a blow across the head, causing him to stagger back and let go his hold on Mack.

The boy engineer did not fall to the ground.

Even while being held by the insane man he had contrived to twist his feet around some part of the engine, and when he was let go he remained perched on the locomotive.

Crawling forward he reached the cow-catcher, and then for the first time noticed that the draw of the bridge over the Hackensack, which they were about to cross, had been opened to afford passage to a schooner, and had not yet been closed.

How should he save the train? How prevent the destruction of property and the lives of the passengers, which now seemed imminent?

This was the thought which possessed his mind to the exclusion of every other idea.

The bridge was not above one hundred yards distant, and whatever was to be done must be done quickly.

He conceived a bold, daring plan.

Hastily stripping himself of his jacket and vest he crawled under the engine and jammed them into the cylinder of the piston which caused the wheels to rotate.

There was a crunching sound, then the cylinder became clogged, the piston ceased to act, the wheels failed to revolve, and the train came to a standstill at the very edge of the bridge.

At the same instant, with a wild, eldritch shriek, the maniac sprang from the cab into the river, and disappeared beneath the surface of the water, above which he was not seen to rise again.

Mac now got into the cab, and his first care was to shut off the steam, and prevent an explosion, which might have resulted from his manipulations with the engine.

Then he turned to look for Snooksy, and found him lying on the floor in an almost exhausted state.

"Hello, Snooksy!" exclaimed he cheerily, aiding his companion to get on his feet. "Did you have a wrestle with the lunatic?"

"You kin bet I did," panted the other, "an' he just knocked the wind outer me. I seed what he was up to, an' cracked him 'cross the head with the shovel. That kinder settled him for a minit, but then he gits up and at me, catches me around the throat an' tries ter chuck me inter the red-hot furnace, which he could ha' done, seein' as how I left the door open. Yer kin bet it was a struggle for life an' death, an' I thort sure my goose was cooked when he spied the river, an' no sooner did he see that when he lets go of me an' jumps overboard. He must a-had the hydyphoby, or somefin like that. But, I say, Mac, how the dickens did you manage ter keep alive an' stop the train? I thort you were runned over when I let yer go."

Mack explained in a few words and received the admiring commendations of his friend, which encomiums were renewed by the passengers, who now began to crowd around to learn the cause of the stoppage, and to whom he was obliged to repeat the story.

The jacket and vest were taken out of the cylinder in a totally demolished condition, a circumstance, however, which afforded the passengers an excuse for making up and presenting a purse to the brave lad. The draw was properly arranged, and once more the train started on its way, Mac leaving the bridge officials to find out what became of the maniac.

No further incident marred the trip or the run home to Hoboken, and that evening Mac had the pleasure of recounting the adventure to his foster-parents and Effie.

"That's mighty strange, Mary," said Bill, from his sick bed. "I wonder who that lunatic could have been?"

"You say," asked his wife, turning to Mac, "that he made special reference to your face?"

"Yes," replied he, "and that's what struck me most. It's the second time, you know, and he couldn't very well have belonged to Velveten George's gang."

"It's a part of the mystery surrounding your birth," thoughtfully continued Mary, "a mystery which I fear will never be lifted. And you think the old man is drowned?"

"I'm sure of it."

But here Mack was mistaken.

The maniac was not drowned.

He came up above the surface under the bridge, and it was owing to this circumstance that he was not seen by those looking for him.

Almost mechanically he swam to the bank, and reaching the mouth of a culvert which drained the surrounding marshes, he crawled through the opening and lay for a time utterly exhausted at the bottom of the conduit.

Fortunately there was but little or no water in the culvert, and though the place was filthy and ill-smelling, he was in no danger of being either suffocated or drowned.

Meanwhile, the bridge officials, finding no trace of him, believed that he had sunk to the bottom, and desisted from further efforts, leaving it to the proper authorities to dredge the river, or wait until the corpse should rise to the surface, as they might see fit to do.

It was dark when the maniac awoke from his sleep of exhaustion; but he neither regarded that fact, nor the position in which he found himself.

With a cunning often met with in persons of unsound mind, he crept along the culvert until his hands touched a sort of shelf formed of bricks against one side of the conduit, and intended as a resting place to those who occasionally entered it for the purpose of cleansing it.

He stretched himself at full length on this shelf, and began to ruminate aloud:

"Ha, ha!" chuckled he. "I gave them the slip this time; no more black dungeons, no more straight-jackets for me. Here, at last, I am free. I am king here, with the rats for my subjects. Ho, ho! Hear how they sing. Yes—yes, my bonnie dears, I'll remain with you; they shall never take me back to the asylum again. I'll work, too. I'll perfect my great invention. I'll show them that I am not mad, and if her face mocks me again, I'll crush it—I'll crush it, though it appear in a hundred disguises."

In this rambling way did the poor lunatic commune with himself, until once more his eyes closed in slumber; and amid the rats and vermin, the darkness and filth, the cold and damp, he slept as peacefully as a child in its downy crib.

The keepers of the lunatic asylum visited Bill Norton's cottage the next day.

They reported that the old man had escaped the day previous, that his name was Silas Raymond, and that though they did not know the precise cause of his madness, they believed that he must have been some eccentric inventor whose mind had become unsettled over his scheme.

He had been in the asylum for many years, and that though at first quite violent, he had recently become so quiet and peaceful that he had not been watched as carefully as he might have been.

They were surprised to hear of his murderous attack on Mac, as they had supposed him entirely harmless, and could not account for this sudden outburst of his old fury.

Accompanied by Mac they visited the Hackensack, and after, as they thought, a complete search, departed as wise as they had come.

Nothing was heard of the maniac for some days, and then rumors came that he had been seen during the night on a large raft paddling himself quite rapidly across the river.

These rumors were at first discredited, because the raft in question, which was used to aid in repairing the bridge, was always found during the day in its proper place, chained to one of the piers of the bridge; but when articles of clothing and food began to disappear from the canalboats moored at this point in the river, and several bowie knives and other weapons had been mysteriously stolen when left carelessly on the deck of any boat over night, things began to assume a different shape, and a party was formed to go out in a rowboat and remain on the river over night.

Mac, hearing of this, obtained permission from his foster parents to go with Snooksy to the village, from which a party was to start, and join them in their search.

He was more enabled to do this from the fact that it was an off night for him and his chum, and they were relieved from duties.

It was not merely the love of the dangerous and exciting which induced the boy engineer to share the perils of this night expedition, but a peculiar fascination, for which he could not account, which drew him towards the maniac ever since the latter had referred to his countenance.

There were altogether six persons in the boat, and they rested on their oars when they arrived in the center of the stream near the railroad bridge.

It was about nine o'clock, and as there was no moon the darkness was relieved only by the faint light of the stars.

This was an advantage to them, as it rendered them less likely to be perceived by the maniac if he should appear, while they, on the other hand, would infallibly hear the commotion in the water caused by the moving of the unwieldy raft.

For over an hour they waited thus, merely backing water to prevent themselves from being drifted along with the tide.

At the end of that time a rippling sound caught their ears, and a minute later the shadowy outline of the raft and its solitary passenger could be traced in the darkness before them.

The moment they beheld it they experienced a danger which they had not provided for.

The tide was running very strongly and the darkness of the night had prevented them from seeing the bulky raft until it was quite close to them. A collision seemed inevitable.

"Hold on, there," cried one of the men. "You are running us down."

But a mad burst of laughter was their only response.

"Back water for your lives!" ordered the self-constituted leader of the party.

But the command came too late. The bulky raft struck the fragile and heavily-weighted rowboat full in the side and capsized her, throwing the man into the water.

And above the shock of the collision, the shrieks of the struggling men, and their cries for help sounded the wild, blood-curdling laugh of the maniac.

CHAPTER VI.

ENTRAPPED.

The cries for help attracted the notice of various persons on board the canalboats, and these at once set out in rowboats to the scene of the catastrophe.

While they are engaged in hauling the drowning men out of the water let us turn our attention to Little Mac.

As soon as he saw that the collision was inevitable he sprang up from his seat and dove into the river at the moment it was capsized.

Being a powerful swimmer and almost as much at home in the water as on dry land, he came up to the surface clear of the upturned boat, and directly beside the raft.

Actuated by a sudden impulse, he climbed up on this, and stood face to face with the maniac.

We have before remarked that there was no moon. That luminary, however, now rose above the horizon and shed its beams full on the forms of the two occupants of the raft.

The maniac presented a truly terrifying appearance. He was barefooted, wore a pair of tattered sailor's breeches and a blue navy shirt, which articles of clothing he had evidently stolen; his head was uncovered, his face pale and haggard, while his long gray hair and beard were tangled and matted. In his hand he held a long heavy pole, which he used to steer the raft; but the moment that the light of the newly risen moon enabled him to clearly see the features of the boy he dropped the pole on the raft, and drawing from his waist a long, glittering bowie knife, he exclaimed:

"That face again. I must crush it; yes, I must crush it."

He made a lunge at Mac's breast, but the boy, deftly evading the thrust, sprang to the other side of the raft and snatching up the pole brandished it in the air, and exclaimed:

"Back! Back, old man, or I'll brain you!"

The maniac saw the determined glitter in the boy's eyes, and a change came over his demeanor.

Suddenly throwing his knife into the river, he burst into a flood of tears, and falling on the boy's neck, in sobbing tones and with infinite pathos, cried:

"Effie! Oh, Effie!"

Mac started and trembled so violently that the pole dropped from his hands and slipped into the stream.

Effie! It was the name engraved on the mound beneath which rested the remains of his mother.

Who was this maniac? What relation was he to her—to him?

He was about to put the question, when the tender mood, either real or feigned, passed away from the lunatic, and he once more broke out in wild fury.

"At last I have you!" shrieked he, suddenly twining his long, bony fingers around the boy's throat. "You cannot escape from me now. Ah! Ah! That sweet, cruel face shall haunt me no longer. At last I will crush it—I will crush it!"

Mac felt his breath come quick and short, he gasped and choked, he grew purple in the face, his eyes seemed to start from their sockets, and his head appeared to be on the point of bursting.

With all the strength he was still master of he twined his arms and legs around the maniac and tried to shake him off.

But in vain. The lunatic clung to him like grim death, and a terrible struggle for life and death ensued on the raft.

A sudden lurch of the latter threw both of them into the river, and there the combat was continued.

It would undoubtedly have ended fatally for Mac had not at this juncture several of the canalboat men, who had by this time rescued the capsized party, plunged into the water and come to his aid.

More dead than alive, he was dragged from the maniac's grip and into one of the boats.

The old man was subsequently secured, and firmly bound, hand and foot, and placed in the bottom of a boat.

The object of the expedition was now accomplished, and though attended with the danger we have described, fortunately without any loss of life.

Mac and Snooksy obtained dry clothes and lodging for the night in one of the canalboats, and when they returned home the next day it was a great relief to Mary and Bill to learn that the maniac, who had conceived such a strange hatred for their adopted son, was at last safely incarcerated in the asylum from which he had made his escape.

It was true that one enemy was, for the time being at least, rendered powerless to harm the boy engineer; but he had other and more bitter foes, who were even then plotting against his life and liberty.

Velveteen George and Jimmy had not been idle. The latter, especially disguised as a street gamin, had paid frequent visits to the railroad depot and picked up various bits of information about Little Mac which would be of service to him in the plot he was weaving to get the boy engineer in the power of the railroad wreckers.

One day he boldly accosted him with the words:

"Say, Mac, give us a chaw of terbaccer."

"I never chew," replied he.

"Oh," sneered Jimmy, "you're one of them pious sort. I'm sorry fur yer, for I heerd a good deal 'bout you an' wanted ter take yer ter New York ter show yer the sights. But of course yer wouldn't go to ther Bowery Theater; oh, no; yer mother'd know yer was out, an' it ain't like Sunday-school. So I can't take yer, though I've got plenty of 'sugar,' an' we could cut a swell shine. I'm sorry for yer, Mac, as I said before. Yer a nice looking boy, an' it's a pity ye're so pious-like."

Taking out a roll of greenbacks from his pocket, he flaunted them in the air before the eyes of the bewildered boy, and then replacing them in his pocket slowly sauntered away.

Now, Mac was but human, after all. His vanity had been excited by the urchin's carefully chosen words, and he did not relish the fling at his moral rectitude. No boy does, however virtuous he may be. Besides, he had often heard speak of the "Old Drury," and his imagination had been further stimulated by the gaudily colored posters affixed to the walls of the depot. He had nothing to do that night, and his foster-mother had requested him to go to New York on some errand. Why could he not accept the generous offer to this unknown admirer of his?

He called the boy back.

"Who are you?" asked he.

"Billy Button," glibly replied the lad.

Had he given his right name, Mac would have instantly recognized him, for Snooksy had told him of the young autocrat of the railroad gang.

"I'll go with you to the Bowery, if you'll assure me that you've come honestly by your money."

"Of course I did," asserted Jim. "Ain't I got a dad who's as rich as blazes; an' don't he give me all the rocks I want? Of course he does, an' why shouldn't he, seein' as I'm his only son and heir?"

"Well, then, where'll I meet you. I've got to go to New York on an errand, and when I get through with that we can go to the theater."

"Do you know where the corner of Bowery and Canal street is?"

"Yes."

"Meet me there at half-past seven."

"I will; but, Billy, I've got a friend called Snooksy. Can I bring him along?"

"Of course yer can," replied he, after a slight pause, adding in an undertone: "I'll fix both of 'em at once."

They parted company shortly after this, and though the young schemer had not forbidden his intended victim to mention their proposed entertainment, yet Mac of his own accord never mentioned a word of it.

He felt rather doubtful whether they would allow him to go, and, boyish-like, he determined to risk a scolding upon his return.

It was the first time he had been disobedient to his foster-parents, and there would be soon cause for him bitterly to repent it.

He and Snooksy were off duty at five o'clock that afternoon, and having dressed themselves in their Sunday

clothes, they bade Bill and Mary good-by and started for New York.

On the way Mac told his companion of the new friend he had made that afternoon and the treat that was in store for them, rousing Snooksy's curiosity and desire to see the entertainment to the highest pitch.

Their errand was properly performed, and promptly at the appointed hour they found themselves at the place of rendezvous.

Jimmy was there before them, and though Mac introduced him to Snooksy, the latter did not recognize him.

There was no wonder in this, as Snooksy had only seen the Twister in the ragged, dirty costume he wore in the woods, while now he was dressed up like a young sport, and clothes make a great difference in the appearance of boys of his class.

"I'm glad ter see yer, boys," exclaimed Jimmy, somewhat disguising his voice. "Had yer grub?"

"Yes," replied Mac.

"Then come right across the street. That's the theater there, where the big lights are shining. They're playin' two bully pieces to-night: 'Nick of the Woods' an' 'Jack Sheppard.' Did yer ever see 'em afore?"

Both Snooksy and Mac were obliged to admit that they never had had that pleasure.

"Never seen 'em!" continued the Twister. "Golly, then yer'll have a regular feast. Whalley's doin' the 'Nick of the Woods,' an' yer'll hear spoutin' that'll raise the hair off yer head. Fanny Herring's goin' ter play 'Jack Sheppard,' an' she's just A No. 1."

By this time they had arrived in front of the theater, and Jimmy, procuring reserved seats in the orchestra chairs, the party passed in.

It is unnecessary to state that Mac and Snooksy enjoyed themselves hugely.

Everything was new and strange to them, and the time passed so rapidly that Mac uttered an ejaculation of dismay, when on leaving the theater at the conclusion of the performance he heard the bells strike the hour of midnight.

"Twelve o'clock!" cried he! "And the last boat leaves at that hour. How'll we get home now? I didn't think the theater would last so long, or I wouldn't have come."

"I'm afraid we'll have to make a night of it," said Snooksy, but little less dismayed than his companion.

"I'm sorry for it!" exclaimed Jimmy, in tones of feigned sympathy. "But yer know what can't be cured must be endured. I've got plenty of stamps left, and I move we get an oyster stew and then go to a hotel for the night."

"What will father and mother think?" muttered Mac. "I've never stayed out over night before."

He began to be heartily sorry that he had come.

But there was nothing to do but submit to the inevitable, and with a sigh he followed Jimmy's lead, until they reached a basement at the head of which was a colored lantern.

After a slight hesitation Mac and Snooksy followed their guide down the steep steps and into the saloon.

It was a long, narrow, low-ceilinged, dingy-looking place, with a bar at one end and several tables ranged along the side.

A number of men were standing at the bar, and as soon as Snooksy caught sight of one of them he turned as pale as death.

"Velveteen George!" gasped he.

"Here they are, dad," sang out Jimmy in his natural tone. "I've steered them here all hunkey."

"The Twister!" cried Snooksy, now recognizing his companion of the evening. "Fly, Mac, fly for your life! We are betrayed!"

The boy engineer was quick to perceive the danger, and turned on his heel to ascend the steps.

But before either he or Snooksy could escape the gang pounced upon them and kept pounding them so unmercifully that they sank stunned, bleeding and helpless to the floor of the dive.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEMON AND THE IMP.

In one of the most palatial residences on Fifth avenue, in the city of New York, resided Mrs. Estelle Mowbray.

On the evening of the day succeeding that on which occurred the incidents related in our last chapter, her spacious

and elegantly decorated parlors were thrown open for a masquerade party, given by the lady to her fashionable friends, in honor of her birthday.

The gorgeously furnished apartments were thronged with merry masquers, whirling in the mazy waltz to the music of the band hired for the occasion, while serenely in their midst, clad in a robe of purple velvet, her person radiant with the flash of many diamonds, proud in her well-preserved beauty, majestic in form and bearing, strode the hostess.

It was a very select affair, and though the masquers were unknown to each other, yet they had all privately revealed themselves to the lady while congratulating her, so that she might know that there were no intruders present.

She was, therefore, somewhat puzzled by the appearance among the crowd of a demon, clad in the orthodox red costume, with horns, tail and cloven hoofs, and a little imp, who bounded about as though made of india-rubber.

Who could they be? They had not unmasked themselves to her, and becoming uneasy, she determined to discover their identity.

Calling a servant, she bade him tell them that the lady wished to see them in the conservatory, and proceeded thither herself, fortunately finding the place temporarily deserted.

She had not long to wait before the demon and the imp appeared.

The former made a profound bow before her, while the latter, by way of showing his courtesy, stood on his head.

"Gentlemen," said she, in a somewhat haughty tone, "I have asked you to meet me here in order to obtain the pleasure of an introduction to you, which, I believe, I have not as yet had. In plain words, may I know who you are?"

"With the greatest of pleasure," replied the demon, raising his mask. "Though I should think that the choice of my costume would have led you to surmise my identity."

"Velveteen George!" gasped Estelle, as soon as she caught sight of his face.

"Your husband," added he, with a leer.

"And your son Jimmy," cried the imp, regaining his normal position and likewise raising his mask. "Don't yer know me, mammy, yer own lovely Jimmy, what is now known as the Twister. Oh, let me give you a twist."

The audacious boy actually tried to hug his mother, but she pushed him rudely from her, and turning to Velveteen George, in a voice almost choking with rage, demanded:

"How dare you come here, sir, and bring that brat with you?"

"I dare do many things," replied he, in a tone of quiet, but deep signification. "Jimmy was dying to have a look at the woman who gave him birth, and seeing in this morning's paper the announcement that the wealthy and fashionable Mrs. Mowbray was going to give a masquerade party this evening, it struck me as being just the opportunity for which I waited, for you know, Estelle, that I must be very careful about showing myself undisguised in public."

"And knowing that, you dare to come here," cried she angrily, "after I had sworn an oath to hand you over to the police if you pestered me any more."

"Oaths are made but to be broken," replied he dryly.

"They are!" exclaimed she exasperated. "You shall see."

On a rustic table near them stood a silver bell.

She struck this.

"Now," said she, "the servant who answers that summons will be despatched for the police."

"I'll bet half a dollar," exclaimed Jimmy, "that he'll be sent for some whisky and cigars. I'm awfully dry an' just dyin' fer a smoke. Say, mammy, yer don't chew ter-bacco, do yer? 'Cause if yer does I'd like ter ask yer for a chaw."

"Estelle," whispered Velveteen George, bending over towards her, "I have found her."

At these words all the color faded from the proud lady's face; she reeled and would have fallen had not the burglar supported her.

At this moment the servant appeared.

"Now," triumphantly whispered the convict in her ear, "order the police."

"John," said she faintly, "a glass of water, if you please."

"An' whisky an' cigars for two," ordered Jimmy, with a chuckle.

The servant looked inquiringly at his mistress, and receiving a confirmatory nod from her left the conservatory and soon returned bearing the required articles.

After he was dismissed, and they were again alone, Velveteen George politely handed the glass of water to Estelle, who, drinking it and feeling somewhat recovered, demanded:

"Well, you have found her—where is she? Does she know all?"

"Calm yourself," said he, "and let us seat ourselves at the table here. We can talk confidentially, and it will seem to any one who might happen to come into the conservatory as if you were merely entertaining a couple of intimate friends, which, indeed, we are—very intimate."

They seated themselves as he directed, and then Jimmy, raising his glass of liquor, exclaimed:

"Mammy, here's to your very good health, an' the hope that we'll freeze together more in the future than we have in the past."

He drained the glass, and George having followed his example, they lit their cigars and commenced to smoke.

"I know you don't object to smoking," said the convict. "Many a time in the good old days I've made cigarettes for you. Ah, happy hours, will they ever come again?"

"Oh, tell me about her!" impatiently exclaimed Estelle. "You are keeping me from my guests. They will wonder at my absence."

"Well, Estelle, you need experience no fear from Effie, for she is dead."

"And you have come here to tell me that," angrily cried she. "I have suspected it all the while, and your confirmation only puts you into my power. I will get rid of you now."

Again she rang the bell.

"I guess," said Velveteen George, with a quiet smile, "you will have to order two more whiskies, and at the same time you might order a plate of ice-cream for yourself. It will look so much more natural. Yes, Effie Mowbray is dead, but her son lives!"

"Two whiskies, two cigars, one ice-cream and a chaw of terbaccer," sang out Jimmy to the servant, as he appeared in answer to the summons.

With the exception of the last-mentioned article, the servant executed the order, and having again taken his leave, Estelle eagerly asked:

"You are sure of that?"

"Pretty sure," replied the convict, "seeing that I've got the youngster safely locked up in my present headquarters, in the forests of New Jersey," and he briefly related what has already been told to the reader.

"You must put him to death!" hissed she.

"And kill the goose that is to lay me golden eggs? Not by a long shot."

"But at least you will prevent him from ever claiming his rights?"

"That depends on circumstances. You see, Estelle, I hold the trump card now, and if you agree to my terms I'll remove the lad thousands of miles away, where he'll continue to remain in ignorance of his parentage. If you do not all New York shall learn by to-morrow who the fashionable Mrs. Mowbray really is, and to whom this palatial residence, the stocks and bonds, the income of which you draw, the splendid equipages, those very diamonds that glitter on your bosom really belong."

"What are your terms?" asked she, thoroughly humbled.

"Well," said he slowly, "first and foremost, that you receive Jimmy into your house. I don't want to have the boy become what I am, and you, his mother, should give him that position in life to which he is entitled."

"Yes, mammy," put in Jimmy, with a swagger, "I wants ter become a sport; that's what I was cut out for. Fast horses, you bet! Champagne, that's my huckleberry, and pretty gals, of course. Jiminy, won't I cut a shine?"

"Secondly," continued Velveteen George, not heeding the interruption, "I'll trouble you for one thousand dollars down and the same amount sent to, say Chicago, every month."

"Would you make me a beggar?" muttered she.

"Beggar, pshaw! Your income is fifty thousand a year, if it's a cent. But you will become a beggar if you refuse my offer."

"But," demanded she, "how do I know but that you are deceiving me now? What proof have I, except your word, that there is such a boy in existence, and that he is in your power? Prove that, and I will accept your terms."

"I will do so," replied he, after a slight pause. "I will bring the boy to you to-morrow night at this hour."

"It is well," said she, arising. "At that time I will have

the money for you. Until then I will acknowledge neither you nor that brat."

"Oh, mammy!" cried Jimmy, in tones of mock injury, "is it thus yer speak of yer lovely kid? Won't yer give me a kiss ter remember yer by? Only one for yer own sweet boy?"

But the lady abruptly terminated the interview by passing through the tall windows which afforded a passage from the conservatory into the parlor.

To the questionings of her friends she gave an indifferent explanation of her absence, and as soon as she could safely do so retired to her own room.

"What I have so long dreaded is about to come to pass," muttered she, pacing up and down the apartment; "but I will foil him yet. If to-morrow night he brings her son into this room the boy will never again leave this place alive."

She unlocked a secret recess of her desk, and drawing therefrom a bottle containing a colorless liquid, examined it in the gas-light with a self-complacent air.

"This will accomplish the purpose," muttered she, replacing the bottle in its hiding-place, locking the recess and concealing the key about her person.

Then she once more descended to her guests in the parlor, and entertained them with all her accustomed grace and dignity.

The demon and the imp were, however, nowhere visible.

They had taken the precaution to leave the house before the hour to unmask had arrived.

Entering the carriage which had brought them hither, they drove to a costumer's, and there resuming their ordinary costumes, they turned their steps toward the ferry, and were soon once again in New Jersey.

It did not take them very long to reach the vicinity of the hut, to which on the previous night they had brought Mac and Snooksy, after overpowering them in the Bowery dive, but even before they arrived at the rendezvous they noticed the lurid glare of a conflagration.

The truth at once flashed into their minds.

The hut was on fire!

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE ESCAPE.

As has been already intimated, Velveteen George and Jimmy, after knocking Mac and Snooksy senseless, had conveyed them to the lone hut in the forests of New Jersey.

This was accomplished by carrying the unconscious lads through a back exit from the dive into Elizabeth street, where a butcher's wagon, belonging to the gang, was drawn up.

They were placed in the bottom of this wagon and their bodies covered with straw so as to be concealed from view, and then the convict and his son taking seats by the driver, the vehicle was driven at a rapid pace to the foot of a pier at the North River, where a rowboat was awaiting them, all the various parts of this kidnaping scheme having been carefully prearranged.

The boy engineer and his friend were taken from the wagon and placed in the bottom of the boat, and Velveteen George and Jimmy having also entered it, the crew, consisting of half a dozen roughs, swiftly rowed the boat across the river.

Arrived at the Jersey shore, another wagon was found awaiting them, and the boat having been concealed in a little cove known only to the party, the gang started off at a rattling gait for their place of rendezvous, bearing with them the still senseless forms of Mac and Snooksy.

Morning was breaking when the hut was reached, and the two boys were soon conveyed to the garret of the shanty.

Throwing them on a pile of mildewed and rotten straw, they were left there to recover consciousness as best they could, while Velveteen George and Jimmy turned in to get a few hours' rest before their projected visit to Estelle Mowbray.

All day long the brave boys were locked in their death-like stupor, and it was only when the twilight was merging into darkness that Mac opened his eyes.

He felt sore and weak, there was a buzzing sound in his head, and for some moments he could not realize where he was.

Gradually, however, the fantastic visions that seemed to be dancing around him began to assume shape, and he recognized that he was lying on the floor of a garret, surrounded by odd scraps of broken furniture and other rubbish.

Slowly he raised himself up to a sitting posture, and then perceived what seemed to him to be the dead body of Snooksy stretched by his side.

With a great cry he threw himself on him and kissed his passive lips.

The contact seemed to infuse life in the waif's form, for he moved slightly, his eyelids trembled for a moment, and then opened, and he faintly murmured:

"Mac!"

"Thank heavens!" exclaimed the boy engineer. "You are alive!"

"Where are we?" feebly asked Snooksy, struggling to his feet.

"I do not know," replied Mac, also arising. "In some garret."

Snooksy glanced around him, and a gleam of intelligence lighted up his eyes.

"I know this place," whispered he. "They've kept me here before; but I managed to get out, and we can get out again."

The boys remained quiet for a few moments until they had regained sufficient strength, and then Mac examined the doors and windows. He found them locked and bolted from the outside, and the latter heavily barred.

"We're in a cage," exclaimed he despondingly, "and I don't see how we can escape."

"Yes, yes, we can," eagerly replied Snooksy. "Let us wait until midnight. Then the gang will be asleep, and we'll feel stronger. We'll get out of this crib, you shall see."

The heavy tread of feet on the outside apprised them of the approach of some one, and a moment later the bolts and bars were withdrawn, the door opened, and a heavy, thick-set, brutal-looking man entered.

"Oh, ho, my hearties!" exclaimed he jeeringly. "So you're awake, are yer? Well, that saves me the trouble of kicking yer inter life. The captain and his kid's gone ter New York, and he told me to keep a good watch over yer. So you've come back to us, Snooksy, have yer? We've got a nice little score ag'in yer for squealin' on us, and we'll pay it off, too, yer bet we will."

"You're a wicked scoundrel, Red-Handed Mike," retorted Snooksy defiantly, "and I'm glad that I've shook you and the gang!"

"Glad, are yer?" savagely cried the ruffian. "Well, yer'll sing another tune to-morrow by daybreak, when yer'll be taken out an' strung up on a tree. We'll show yer how we treat traitors and deserters. An' yer needn't think yer can escape by ther trap, the way ye did the last time. That 'ere machine's been closed up, and yer might as well say good-by ter life, for you'll surely be hung to-morrow."

"We'll see about that," quietly replied the lad.

"Yis, we'll see," said the man, placing on the floor a jug of coffee and some slices of bread which he had brought along with him. "For some reason or other, the captain told me to give the other chap his supper, an' I suppose he'll share it with yer. Well, all I've got ter say is, eat hearty, for it's the last meal yer'll ever eat in this world."

So saying, he left the room, carefully locking and bolting the door behind him.

"Was it by the trap that you wanted to escape?" asked Mac, when they were once more alone.

"Yes," replied Snooksy despondently, "I'm afraid they've got the best of us this time."

"No, they ain't," cheerfully asserted the boy engineer. "We will beat them yet. Let's eat our supper first, for I'm as hungry as a wolf, and I'll tell you of the idea I've got."

They speedily dispatched the coffee and bread, and the meal did more than anything else to inspire them with renewed strength and hope.

"Now, what's your idea?" asked Snooksy. "We've got to escape to-night, for I shouldn't wonder but what they'd hang me in the morning."

"My plan is to fire the shanty."

"Fire the shanty?" ejaculated his companion.

"Yes."

"We'd be burned to death."

"No, we wouldn't. We can gather all the rubbish together in a heap in one corner right under the roof and

pack the straw around it. I always carry matches with me, and we'll have a roaring blaze in a minute. Of course there'll be plenty of smoke and heat, but I think that there'll be a hole burnt into the roof in less than no time sufficiently large enough to enable us to crawl through."

"And if we fail?"

"Well," grimly replied Mac, "then there won't be any necessity to hang you in the morning. It's a desperate thing, I know, but it's the only chance we've got. Are you willing to undertake it with me?"

"I am. There's my hand on it."

The two boys clasped their hands together, and for a few moments stood silently gazing into each other's face.

"Snooksy," said Mac, his voice slightly trembling, "we may both escape or we may both be burned to death, or, then, again, one of us alone may get free. If I should die and you be saved, you will go to my foster-parents and Effie, won't you? You will tell them all how my single act of disobedience to them has been the cause of my death, and how sorry I was for it; you will kindly ask them to forgive me and to think of me kindly. You'll do this, won't you?"

He gazed wistfully at his friend, and a tear, which he could not repress, issued from his eye and coursed slowly down his cheek.

"I will, Mac, I will," huskily replied Snooksy, "though maybe the good Father in heaven, what Mrs. Norton told us about, will be kind to us an' let us both escape. If one of us is bound to die, I hope it's me, seein' you've got kind friends, who love you like as if you were their own flesh an' blood, while poor Snooksy is all alone in the world. I've never had nothin' but rags an' blows till you took me in, an' if I die there'll be nobody that'll care, anyway."

The rude pathos of the poor waif sent a thrill of emotion through Mac's breast, and impulsively he wound his arm around Snooksy's waist and embraced him.

"No, no, Snooksy," said he earnestly. "You've got friends now who'll mourn for your loss as much as they will do so for mine. We shan't either of us die, and we'll never do anything again to grieve the hearts of those who love us."

They continued their conversation long into the night.

From below they could hear the sound of boisterous revelry.

Evidently the gang was taking advantage of the absence of their leader to indulge in a drunken spree, and the clinking of glasses, and the shouts and snatches of ribald song, which the boys heard, convinced them that the desperadoes were demolishing a great quantity of vile liquor, and would soon all be stupefied with drink.

This was a welcome fact to them, for it gave them the assurance that the fire would not be discovered until they could have made good their escape.

If the thought that perhaps the drunken wretches might be burned to death in the general conflagration entered their minds, they gave no heed to it, for it was a matter of life and death to the boys, and their self-preservation was to be secured at any price.

The riotous sounds continued late into the night; then they gradually ceased, and an intense silence reigned supreme.

The boys waited yet a while, and then the continued stillness convincing them that the gang were all asleep, they set about to construct what might become either their beacon of rescue or their funeral pyre.

The inflammable materials being properly arranged, Mac drew forth a match from his pocket, and striking a light, applied it to the mass.

In an instant a bright tongue of flame darted upwards to the roof, and the garret became full of smoke.

Fortunately there were no panes of glass to the window, and the boys pressed their faces to the bars so that they could inhale the pure air from without, until the flames should afford them an outlet through the roof.

It took scarcely a minute for the fire to communicate itself to the dry timber of which the roof was composed, and a sudden draft of air that for a moment blew the flame back showed that the desired opening had been made.

Now came the decisive moment.

"Follow me!" cried Mac, springing on the window sill, and thence grasping the burning and charred rafters with both his hands, he drew himself through the opening onto the roof.

A minute later and Snooksy stood at his side.

"Your clothes are on fire!" cried Mac, tearing off the burning strips of garment. "Are you hurt?"

"No; and you?"

"My hands are blistered, but no matter. We must get off the roof. Ah, the gang have discovered the fire."

The heat and smoke had awakened the ruffians from their drunken slumber, and they sprang to their feet, utterly dumbfounded and bewildered.

"We'll have to jump it," said Snooksy. "It's only a dozen feet to the ground and the earth is soft."

"Here goes, then."

They simultaneously sprang into the air and reached the soil unhurt.

"Now let's cut and run for it!" cried Mac.

And run they did, but not a dozen paces before they found themselves clutched in a man's powerful grasp.

"Not so fast, my jolly young coves!" exclaimed he.

"Velveteen George!" gasped Mac, recognizing his captor.

"An' Jimmy, the Twister, yer bet!" exclaimed that young hopeful, giving Snooksy a rap over the head with his fist.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF FOR SAN FRANCISCO.

It was a sad disappointment to the boys to be thus recaptured after having safely made their escape from the burning hut, and they struggled violently to free themselves from Velveteen George's grasp.

But whatever success might have attended their efforts was frustrated by the appearance of the rest of the gang on the scene.

Mac and Snooksy were speedily overpowered and tied to the trunks of two trees by means of some stout whipcord, which one of the gang happened to have in his pocket.

"Curse you, you young varmint!" yelled Red-Handed Mike. "You'll roast us alive, will yer? Cap," added he, turning to Velveteen George, "I move we chuck 'em inter the flames."

"Yer kin do so with that little snake of a Snooksy," replied the convict indifferently. "I've got other plans for the other kid."

"Ah, what's ther good of chuckin' him in ther fire?" exclaimed Jimmy. "He'd be roasted in a minute, an' where'd the fun come in. No; let's hang him. That's the ticket. Jiminy, how he'd bob up and down. It would be better'n a circus."

"Yes, yes," chorused the ruffians. "Let's hang him!"

"You can do with him what you please," said Velveteen George. "As far as burning down the old shanty is concerned, I intended to do that myself to-morrow night. The place is getting too warm for us, anyhow, and as I'm ter git a pile of rocks, I was thinking of taking the whole gang out West. Things are more lonely out there, and there's less chance of being robbed."

"So the old shebang is gone," continued he, as the hut at that moment fell into a mass of burning and charred ruins. "We'll have ter hide in the cave until we leave this part of the country. Now, just finish yer sport, an' then we'll turn in."

To say that the prospect of his approaching death did not terrify Snooksy would be to affirm of him a bravado and recklessness which he did not possess.

Life to him was as dear as to any other boy of his age, and his face became deathly pale, his fettered limbs trembled, and hot tears dashed from his eyes.

"Wicked men," he said pleadingly, "can you go heaping this new sin on yer hearts? I'm only a poor miserable boy, an' yer drove me ter peach on yez by the blows an' curses yer guv me; don't kill me; don't hang me; let me live, an' I'll never say a word ag'in yer. Yer goin' far away an' I can't do yer any harm, anyway. Please don't murder me."

"None but a cowardly set of ruffians like you," added Mac, his eyes flashing with indignation, and his voice ringing with scorn and contempt, "would attempt such a fiendish deed as you are about to do. Why my life is preserved I do not know; probably to endure tortures worse even than death; but I say this, that if the sight of this poor boy dangling from the limb of a tree affords you so much amusement, why, string me up beside him, and, in the words of that little snake there you'll have a double circus."

"Oh, stow yer gab!" exclaimed Jimmy, pulling him by the nose, an indignity which Mac would have been quick to resent had his hand only been loose. "This here ain't none of your funeral. Snooksy's goin' ter be hung, an' that settles it. You're right, though, when yer say that yer'll be wishin' yerself dead. My dad's goin' ter take yer in hand, an' though yer too costly ter him ter kill yer, he'll knock half the life out of yer, anyway. Won't yer, dad?"

"That's the programme, Jimmy," replied his worthy sire. "I'd knock the whole life out of you," cried Mack, "if you'll only set me at liberty for a minute."

"Come, now, let's start the circus!" exclaimed Red-Handed Mike, who had gone in search of a rope and now returned with one.

He threw the hempen cord over a stout limb of the tree to which Snooksy was bound, and then forming a slip-knot at one end of the rope, he passed the noose over the poor lad's head and fastened it under his chin.

The terrible strain on the boy's nerves caused him to faint, and his head fell forward on his breast. As for Mac, he shut his eyes to hide from his sight the terrible deed which he was powerless to avert.

"Now!" cried Mike, "all hands get hold of the rope, and when I cut him loose give a pull an' up he goes."

All the ruffians, with the exception of Velveteen George, grasped hold of the rope, Jimmy along with the rest.

"One, two, three!" cried the young scapegrace. "Bounce him!"

With a clasp-knife Mike cut the cord, and the unfortunate lad swung up into the air, and dangled at about an equal distance from the tree and ground.

At this instant a rifle shot rang out from behind the trees, and a bullet, fired with unerring aim, cut the rope in twain.

Snooksy fell to the ground, limp and apparently lifeless, and the sudden release of his weight from the rope caused the ruffians who were pulling it to tumble to the earth in a heap.

Before they could spring to their feet a detachment of Jersey militia, with their guns to their shoulders, rushed out from the thicket where they had lain concealed and made them prisoners. The shouts and hurrahs with which the soldiers had come to the rescue caused Mac to open his eyes, and a moment later, being freed from his bonds by the knife of a soldier, he was bending over Snooksy trying to recall him to life.

This opportune advent of the militia was due to the following facts: Ever since the wrecking of the train, which we have already described, the Governor of New Jersey had taken the matter in hand, and determined to rout out the band of desperadoes by force of arms.

The subject was kept a profound secret even from the newspapers; but efficient detectives were placed on the trail, and after they had reported that the lone hut was undoubtedly the rendezvous of the railroad wreckers, a troop of militia was despatched to capture the villains, with the result above mentioned.

Their triumph, however, was somewhat dimmed by the escape of Red-Handed Mike, Velveteen George and Jimmy.

The leader had, indeed, caught sight of the concealed troops at the moment the shot was fired, and knowing that his gang would surely be overcome by the superior numbers and discipline of the armed soldiers, he suddenly caught up his son in his arms and disappeared in the forest.

There he was a moment later joined by Mike, who had made good his escape while the militia were overcoming the ruffians on the ground.

"They've got the best of us this time," growled Mike.

"Yes, yes; but there's no time to lose. We must reach the cave if we want to save our necks."

"Won't they find us there?" asked Jimmy.

"No. None but the gang know of the secret entrance, and they won't peach on us."

The three hastily started in the direction of their subterranean hiding-place.

In the meantime the captured ruffians were placed in single file, guarded on either side by the soldiers, with drawn weapons, ready to shoot down the first one who made the least attempt to escape. The still unconscious Snooksy was carried in the arms of a brawny corporal.

Mac fell into the ranks, and a detachment of six men being left behind to scour the vicinity for the escaped desperadoes and to see that the fire from the hut did not

communicate to the surrounding forest, the rest took up the march towards the nearest village, which they reached at daybreak.

Here, by appointment, a special train awaited them, which conveyed the party to Jersey City, where the prisoners were delivered up to the sheriff of the county and brought to jail.

During the march through the forest Snooksy already began to give signs of returning life, and by the time they were on the train he was quite restored and exceedingly thankful for his narrow escape.

The boys were overjoyed to discover that their old friend Jack Thompson was on the locomotive in the capacity of fireman, and they soon presented themselves to him in the cab.

"Mac and Snooksy, or their ghosts, by jingo!" exclaimed the fireman, as he caught sight of them. "Why, you young scalawags, what the deuce have you been doing with yourselves? Why, do you know that Bill's been worrying himself well on your account? Most people worries themselves ill, I know, but when you didn't come home night afore last, and Mary told him so, he gets right up out of his sick bed an' says he, 'I'm better now, an' I'm goin' to look for those boys,' and, sure enough, better he was. He's been hunting all over New York for yez, and Mary's been goin' on fearfully, an' Effie——"

"What about Effie?" agitatedly asked Mac.

"Oh, find out when you see her," mischievously replied Jack, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

Mac then related the adventures through which he and Snooksy had passed, and the train having reached Jersey City by the time he concluded, they bid a hasty farewell to Jack, and taking a car rode over to Hoboken.

We will not describe the meeting between the boys and Mary and Effie.

However much the mother and daughter felt inclined to scold them, the recital of the dangers the lads had overcome changed their anger and anxiety to deep thankfulness.

"Bill is still out hunting for you two," said Mrs. Norton, applying a bandage to Mac's blistered hands, which still continued to smart. "When he returns I shall insist upon it that we move away from here. I have suspected that Velveten George was your enemy ever since you spoke to me about your last meeting with him, and we must go where he cannot find you."

"Here comes father!" cried Effie, who was glancing out of the window.

A moment later Bill entered the room.

"So you're back, are you?" said he, cordially shaking the boys by the hand. "Well, you needn't tell me your story, for I know all about it. It's in everybody's mouth at the depot. Mary," added he, turning to his wife, "pack up what things we've got and get ready to start this afternoon. We take the 6 p. m. through train for San Francisco."

"San Francisco!" ejaculated she in surprise.

"Yes. The president of our road has just received a letter from a friend of his in California, who is about to start a new road from Los Angeles to San Francisco, asking him to send on two engineers and two firemen. He offered me the position with the privilege of taking along whom I choose. Jack Thompson's willing to go, and with Mac and Snooksy will just fill up the team. I want to get away to-night so as to give the slip to Mac's enemies."

The six o'clock train which left New York for San Francisco that evening carried along with it our party, but by some unfortunate fate a later train carried Velveten George, Red-Handed Mike and Jimmy bound for the same destination. They had, by some manner of means, learned of the departure of our hero and party.

CHAPTER X.

MAC'S OVATION.

If ever Byron woke one morning and found himself famous, that same experience occurred to Mac on the morning after his arrival in San Francisco.

The party had taken lodgings in a second-rate but respectable hotel, and the men and boys were up bright and early, intending to take a walk through the beautiful city

before presenting themselves to the president of the road, to whom they had been directed.

The president called later and they were in consultation with him for some time, and then they adjourned to the parlor.

In the parlor they met Mrs. Norton and Effie, who had by this time partaken of their breakfast.

An introduction to the president followed, and the gentleman capped the climax of his kindness by offering them, rent free, a pretty cottage on the line of the railroad, and but a few miles from Los Angeles.

"You are too kind," murmured Mary, hesitating to accept the generous offer.

"Nonsense!" replied the good-natured president. "There's a selfish reason for my action. You see, the cottage belonged to my mother, who has recently died, and as my wife and family would rather live in a fashionable house in San Francisco, I would have let it to perfect strangers or suffer it to go to rack and ruin. Now you may say that I know you but a short time, but, believe me, madam, when I say that in that space of time I have conceived a high regard for you and your amiable daughter, and I am sure that both you and she will do your best to keep the cottage in a neat and presentable condition. That will be ample consideration for the rent, and thus, you see, you are the one, who in accepting are making me your debtor."

This neatly worded reply settled the matter, and Mary could not help accepting the cottage after that.

"And now, Mrs. Norton," continued he, "I take the pleasure of inviting you and Effie to take part in the celebration and trial trip to-day. Of course your husband and the rest will be present, but who will drive the engine that, for the present, must remain a secret."

And with a curious twinkle in his eye the genial-hearted old gentleman arose and bade them all a cordial good-by.

"That's the kind of a man I like to work for," enthusiastically exclaimed Jack Thompson, after the president had departed.

"You bet!" cried Snooksy. "He lays right over our former superintendent."

"He's a splendid man," said Mrs. Norton. "How kindly he forced that cottage on me. I declare I don't know whether I've received or done a favor."

"Oh, mother," exclaimed Effie delightedly, "just think of it. We'll have the cottage all to ourselves, and father and Jack and Snooksy and Mac will live there, and I'm sure there's a pretty garden around it, with grapevines and honeysuckles. And I can tend the flowers and watch the trains go by, and won't hurrah when I see father or Mac in the cab. As Snooksy would say, you just bet I will!"

And overjoyed to get off this bit of slang without assuming the responsibility therefor, she danced around the room, and successively embraced all present, Mac last, but not least.

The morning passed quickly, and having partaken of an early dinner our party shortly before noon started for the depot.

This they had no difficulty in finding, but they were hardly prepared for the sight there revealed to their eyes.

The depot itself was profusely decorated with American flags, the platform was similarly ornamented, while before and around the latter a vast concourse of people, all tricked out in holiday costume, was congregated.

Escaping the observation of the crowd, Mr. Norton, according to the directions given him by the president, led his party through a side door into the depot, where they were received by that gentleman and introduced to several officers of the road and their ladies.

The ordinary hauteur sometimes manifested by employers towards their employees seemed to be entirely absent in those present, and our friends were received on the best of terms.

Here also was the train in which the first trip was to be made, and a number of painters were busy putting the finishing touches to a name they were painting on the locomotive. Flags, garlands of flowers and leaves, and various other decorations were being affixed to the train, while two colored waiters were actively engaged in opening several baskets of champagne, and in arranging a number of glasses on various trays.

A band of music now formed itself into a line, and the directors and their ladies joining the procession, with the president and Mac at its head, the musicians struck up

"Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes," and all marched out on the platform.

The audience received the procession with tumultuous applause, and after this had quieted down the president advanced a few steps forward, and said:

"My friends, without undertaking at this moment to detail the labor and expense it has cost us to build and equip this new and necessary road, I wish but to state that what we have undertaken has been achieved. Our business to-day is first to christen the new locomotive. You, my friends, to whose patronage we look to for success, shall have a voice in this matter. Doubtlessly you have all been informed of the heroic boy who has proved his courage and competency under circumstances that would have caused the stoutest hearts to quail. That boy stands beside me. He is to be in our service, he is to drive the new engine, his name is Little Mac, and now I ask you what shall we call the locomotive?"

A shout arose from the assembled multitude that fairly made the welkin ring.

"Little Mac!"

"Then," cried the president, "'Little Mac' it shall be."

The band played "Hail, Columbia," a cannon was fired off, and, after a warning whistle the train started out of the depot.

To the surprise and joy of our young hero, he beheld on the locomotive, painted in letters of gold, the name "Little Mac."

The president had shrewdly taken time by the forelock, and neatly prevented Mac from seeing what the painters had been doing.

The colored waiters, meanwhile, had been busy passing foaming glasses of champagne among the guests on the platform, and in obedience to the cries of the excited populace Mac stepped forward, glass in hand, and said:

"Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I am only a boy, and I do not know how to express in words the feeling in my heart. I never expected this honor, and it now embarrasses me. I can drive an engine better than I can make a speech, and I pledge this glass to the hope that no evil will ever befall the Los Angeles Branch Road or any one connected with it."

These words, entirely impromptu, and spoken with great emotion, roused the audience to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, and after the wine had been drunk, and at a sign from the president the guests had taken their place in the cab, and he gave the signal for starting.

Amid the booming of cannon, the playing of the musicians, the shouts and applause of the spectators and the congratulation and good wishes of all, the "Little Mac" thundered out of the depot, and with our hero grasping the throttle in one hand, and triumphantly waving an American flag in the other.

CHAPTER XI.

A FORTUNATE THROW.

The trip to Los Angeles was made by Mac in two hours less time than by the regular route, to which this branch road was to run in opposition.

The result more than exceeded the most favorable anticipations of the president and directors.

After making a short stay at the terminus, and partaking of some refreshments, Mac ran the train on the return track and started for San Francisco.

When about half an hour's distance from Los Angeles, Mr. Johnson, the president, came into the cab and told Mac to slacken the train so as to bring it to a halt before a vine-embowered cottage about a hundred yards along the road.

This the young engineer did, and then Mr. Johnson said: "That, Mac, will be your future home, and that of your foster-parents and friends."

"What a pretty place it is!" exclaimed Mac enthusiastically.

"It's finer'n a palace!" added Snooksy.

"Now, boys," continued the president, "jump off, and I'll tell the rest of your party to alight."

"But who's to run the engine back to Frisco?" asked Mac.

"An' who's to tend to the fires?" inquired his chum.

"I've looked out for that," pleasantly replied their friend, "and have two men in the cars who can manage the train. I'll send them into the cab."

He left the boys, and a minute later they were relieved from further duty, and, alighting from the engine, found Bill, Mary, Jack and Effie already awaiting them.

The party gave three rousing cheers as the train moved on, and then repaired to their new home.

The structure itself was one of those low stone buildings built by the Spaniards in California, and known as adobe houses.

But the interior consisted of four or five rooms all neatly furnished and fully equipped with household articles. And the gardens, grapevines and honeysuckles which surrounded the house were all that Effie had imagined.

They were agreeably surprised to find a neat Spanish girl awaiting them.

In somewhat broken English she informed them that she had been the maid of Mr. Johnson's mother, who had, previous to her decease, occupied the house, and that she had been advised of their coming and had supper prepared for them, if they would be pleased to accept it.

Mary had always been accustomed to wait upon herself and family, but the services offered by Manuela, the Spanish maid, were none the less acceptable to her.

The first night was spent in examining all the rooms of the building and the gardens; and, thoroughly tired out, the party now retired to rest in the old-fashioned but comfortable Spanish bedsteads.

The men and boys were up with sunrise the next morning, and, walking the distance to Los Angeles, reported for duty to the local superintendent.

One evening about a week after the opening of the new route Mac was making the home trip to Los Angeles.

The weather had, during the day, suddenly changed from fair to foul, and a fine, drizzling rain was falling from the dull, leaden sky overhead.

It was already dark when the train rushed past their home, and the boys for the first time missed Effie's face from the door.

"She isn't there!" exclaimed Mac, peering vainly through the darkness.

"Of course she ain't," said Snooksy. "Yer wouldn't want her to stand out in the rain, would yer?"

"No," replied Mac, in a low tone, more as if in answer to his own thoughts than to the question addressed to him. "But yet it kinder makes me feel queer. I've never had an accident yet on this road, and I hope I never will, and, somehow, seeing Effie every time I passed here, I sorter looked on her as a protecting angel. You may think it's all foolishness, Snooksy, but I tell you the fact that she wasn't standing before the door has made me nervous-like, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if——"

Crash! came something flying through the window of the cab.

"What's that?" cried both boys in concern.

"A lantern!" exclaimed Mac, picking it up from the floor. "Our lantern! That means danger!"

There was an apparatus connected with the train, by which the engineer could apply the brakes at once and without the aid of the brakeman.

To shut off the steam and turn this mechanism was with Mac but the work of a moment, and the train came to a sudden halt to the great wonder and affright of the passengers.

Mac and Snooksy, each with a lantern in his hand, sprang from the engine and ran up the track, followed by a number of the passengers who had come out of the cars.

About ten feet from where the train was standing there was a sharp curve, and directly behind this curve, and in such a position that those in the engine could not possibly have discovered it, was a perfect barricade of logs and fallen trees.

Had not the boys been warned by the throwing in of the lantern the train would infallibly have been wrecked, and heaven only knows what loss of life ensued.

The passengers who had followed the boys turned pale as they recognized how narrow had been their escape from death; and when Snooksy explained how they had been forewarned, the question that rose to their lips was:

"Who threw the lantern?"

"Effie!" cried Mac.

Whether it was in answer to the question, or because at that moment the young girl, dripping with wet, pale and breathless, bounded into his arms, we do not know; but there she lay, sobbing, on his breast.

"Effie," asked Mac, pressing the young girl closer to him

as though to shield her from the pitiless rain, "tell me, was it you who threw the lantern into my cab? Was it you who saved all our lives?"

"Yes, yes!" sobbed she, almost hysterically. "I didn't faint, though I thought all the world was dancing around me. I was firm; I'm weak and trembling now because I can't help it; but I stood beside the track, and when you came along—I didn't think of the train and the passengers; it seemed to me as if it was you all alone who was to be killed. I prayed to heaven for strength, and that heaven would direct the lantern; and it struck the window, didn't it? I heard the glass break, and then the train dashed by me and I didn't know whether you could stop it in time; but you did, and the wicked men did not kill you."

And as if to assure herself that he was indeed alive, she wound her arms around his neck and pillowed her head on his shoulder.

He allowed her some time to quiet her agitation, and then he gently asked:

"But how did you happen to discover this fiendish design?"

"You know, Mac," replied she, raising her head and glancing lovingly at him, "that I always was by the door to greet you when you passed by the house, and to-night, because it was dark and rainy and you might not see me, I lit the lantern and took it along."

"And while I was standing waiting for the train I began to think, how, I don't know, of the curve, and that on such a night as this there ought to be somebody stationed there with a signal to see that the track was clear. And then like a streak of lightning the idea struck me that I would signal you to-night."

"I ran toward the curve with all my might, and just before I got there I heard men's voices. I thought I should die of fright, and then the next moment I felt bound to find out what they were doing there."

"So I put out my light and crept along the bushes as softly as I could. I saw them just finishing placing the logs and trees across the track. There were two men and a boy, and I heard them talk of you and Snooksy, and that you had escaped them once, but wouldn't do it again."

"Velveteen George!" interrupted Mac, with a start of surprise.

"And Red-Handed Mike an' Jimmy!" added Snooksy. "I thort we'd left them villains behind us."

"They must have tracked us here," replied Mac.

"I didn't dare to stir," continued Effie, "and I was afraid every moment that they would discover me with the dark-lanterns they were carrying in their hands. But they didn't, and after they got through with their wicked work they went away, and I crept up along the track as far as I could, and waited for you. I had no match to light the lantern, and, besides, I didn't dare to do it for fear the light would betray me; so all I could do was to throw the lantern into the cab, and, thank heaven, that was sufficient."

"Effie," exclaimed Mac, "you're a noble girl, and I'm proud of you! Come; you must go with me right into the house or else you'll catch your death of cold. Snooksy and the passengers will remove the obstructions and in a few moments I'll be back and run that train to Los Angeles in spite of Velveteen George and all his gang!"

The president of the road, on learning that Velveteen George and his gang were in town and up to their villainous work, extended to Little Mac and his friends a week's vacation in order to run them down and put them in jail, if possible. Little Mac and Snooksy disguised themselves and entered one of the gambling dens of the city. Luckily, Velveteen George and his crowd were present, and playing. Little Mac hastened to the nearest police station, stated to the captain where the villains were, and the captain sent a patrol wagon full of police. The place was raided and Velveteen and his friends locked up. That same night the president's house was visited by burglars and one of them was wounded by the president and the next morning he was sent to jail. He was recognized by the police as Scar-faced Pedro. But our hero and his friends were yet to go through some startling adventures.

CHAPTER XII.

ATTACK.

Estelle Mowbray sat in her luxuriously furnished parlor at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, holding in her hand a copy of the Chronicle.

It was on the morning of the day succeeding the one Velveteen George had been captured, and two days after her arrival in the golden city of the West.

"The fool! the idiot!" muttered she, again perusing the account of the capture. "So he's got himself into jail, has he? A fine schemer, indeed! Oh, were I a man that brat wouldn't breathe the air of this world long."

The entrance of a servant interrupted her soliloquy.

"A clergyman wishes to see you, ma'am," said he.

"A clergyman!"

"Yes."

"What name did he give?"

"No name. He says he's from the prison."

"Send him here."

The servant departed and a moment later a tall, lean man, clad in ministerial black and whose clean-shaven face wore a sanctimonious look, entered the room.

Estelle rose at his entrance, and, after gazing at him keenly, went to the door and turned the key in the lock.

Then she turned toward her visitor and simply said:

"You are a clergyman."

"You've struck it this time, ma'am," said he with a light laugh. "I'm Greasy Joe, general capper and roper-in for the house that was pulled last night. I happened to be out on the fly when the cops lugged the gang. But I went to see 'em this morning, in the parson dodge, of course, and I had a little talk with Velveteen George. He wants to see you."

"Of course he does," sneered the lady. "Now that he's got himself into a mess he wants me to get him out of it."

"That's the ticket, ma'am; and he says you can do it. He thinks a good deal of you, ma'am."

"Indeed, I feel highly flattered. Well, I suppose I must see him. Can I speak to him alone?"

"Not if you go in the dress you've got on. It's only parsons and sisters of charity that can talk to the prisoners. They're supposed to chin religion, you know."

"Can you procure me a disguise?"

"Yes, ma'am, if you will go along with me."

"I'll meet you at the corner in ten minutes."

"All right, ma'am."

This ended the interview, and half an hour later the keeper of the jail ushered Estelle, disguised as a sister of charity, into the cell where Velveteen George was confined.

Making a reverent bow to the pretended nun, he left them alone together.

"Heaven be with you, my son," said Estelle, in a loud tone, and then being sure that they were not overheard, she approached the convict and whispered:

"Fool!"

"Thank you for the compliment," replied he, in a low tone.

"I've got a good mind to let you rot in jail," continued she.

"You dare not. I know too much."

"How am I to get you out?" asked she, after a pause. "Bribe the keeper?"

"No; that might possibly do were I the only one, but Mike and Jimmy are also lugged."

"Oh, yes," sneered she, "that precious son of mine. I might have known that he'd be in the same mess with you; he always is."

"I'm proud of him!" replied the father, and he meant it.

"Well, I'm not," said she dryly; "but come; tell me what I'm to do. This interview cannot be prolonged forever."

"Here is a chart," said he, handing her a rude drawing. "It will show you the way to the hiding-place of Scar-Faced Pedro's gang, in the mountains outside of San Francisco. With the aid of the explanation therein you'll have no trouble in finding it. Proceed there and acquaint the gang that their leader is in jail."

"Yes, I read something about that in the morning paper. But they say he's badly wounded."

"So they thought at the time, but the doctors extracted the bullet and bandaged up his arm. He was brought here during the night and locked up in a cell. They think it's safer than if they'd sent him to the hospital."

"But how did you find all this out?"

"Oh, the keeper told me, never suspecting that I was one of the gang."

"Scar-Faced Pedro's?"

"Yes. I joined it the other day, and that's why I have that chart. It's against our oath to show that map to any one, but I can trust you with it. You have too much at stake to betray either me or my companions. Well, you

are to tell the gang to make an assault upon the prison to-night."

"Make an assault?"

"Yes; this shebang is old and rotten. It wouldn't stand much of an attack from a hundred men, and they haven't got much of a guard here, anyway."

The keeper approaching the cell at this instant, Estelle began to pray in a loud tone of voice, and shortly afterward left the cell and jail.

On the outskirts of San Francisco, hidden from general view by an overhanging cliff, accessible only by certain secret passages, nestling between steep and almost perpendicular walls of rocks, is a green and verdant slope or plateau, several acres in extent.

Here was a regular encampment, men, women and children, all banded together by the ties of plunder and theft.

The rogues' colony, if so it might be termed, numbered over a hundred souls, consisting of the very dregs of San Francisco society.

During the day they roamed through the streets of the city, begging, tramping, stealing, just as opportunity offered itself. At night they congregated here to divide the spoils of the day and spend the time in riotous excesses and the drunken sleep which succeeded them.

In vain the police and even the military had tried to dislodge them from their stronghold.

The armed rabble, superior in position, if not in numbers, obliged their invaders to retreat with heavy losses, and since, recently, they had been left severely alone.

Whatever authority was recognized and submitted to by the lawless mob, was that exercised by Scar-Faced Pedro and a few more of his more trusty followers.

The setting sun was already throwing its last rays athwart the slope, and the men and women were in loud tones discussing among themselves the startling news which they had just received from the city, when Estelle suddenly appeared among them.

She still wore her sacerdotal disguise, and the gang were at a loss to account for her knowledge of the secret passages and her consequent arrival, when she said:

"Friends, I come from Scar-Faced Pedro."

At these words they all crowded around her and listened to her in silence and with the greatest attention.

In a few words she related her mission, and then asked:

"Will you free your leader and those who are imprisoned with him?"

"We will!" cried they, as with one voice.

"You are armed?"

"Every man among us," replied one of the ruffians, "has a revolver and plenty of ammunition, too."

"The prison," continued Estelle, "is situated, as you all know, probably from experience within its walls, on a hill a little outside of the city. The open country is all around it. You must go into the city in small groups to avoid attraction. At midnight you must all meet behind the rear walls, which is the one nearest to the cells, and batter it down with crossties, which you can get from where they are lying along the line of the railroad. The work must be done quickly and effectually. Whatever resistance you meet must be overcome. It may cost some of you your lives. Again I ask, will you do it?"

"We will!" exclaimed the men, brandishing their weapons as if for immediate use.

It was midnight.

The sun had sunk, blood-red, beneath the western horizon, an ominous sign, and hardly had the night set in before the sky was overcast with heavy banks of clouds, and these shortly afterward broke and the rain descended in torrents amid the lightning's lurid flash and the thunder's deafening crash.

A fitting night for the work in hand.

Within the jail all was apparently quiet and serene.

The keepers huddled together around a fire which they had built in the waiting-room, dozing over the clay pipes they were smoking.

The prisoners were silent, but alert.

In some mysterious manner almost all had obtained information of the intended attack on their bastille, and they were on the qui vive to do whatever they could toward aiding their friends on the outside.

In his cell sat Scar-Faced Pedro, with one arm in a sling.

Though wounded, his robust constitution had been but

little weakened, and he looked like a man who, even one-armed, could stand his ground.

"Bang!" went a heavy sound, followed by the crash of trembling masonry.

The keepers sprang from their stools in alarm.

"What's that?" cried one.

"Lightning's struck the jail!" exclaimed another.

"Bang! bang!"

The battering was kept up effectively.

A large breach in the prison wall had been accomplished.

A loud hurrah was heard from the mob without.

The prisoners set up an answering shout.

There was now no mistaking the sounds.

"The prison is attacked!" shouted the keepers. "To the rescue! to the rescue!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DREAM AND ITS AWAKENING.

The president had informed Bill of the mission he had entrusted to Mack and Snooksy, and he in turn had imparted the information to Mary and Effie, and thus they felt no alarm at the boys' absence, though, of course, they were as yet ignorant of the exciting adventures through which the brave lads had passed.

It was toward the evening of the day on which occurred the events depicted in our last chapter, and Effie had been sent by her mother to draw a pail of water from the well which was situated at some little distance from the house.

With the pail in hand she tripped along, humming a merry song and thinking all the while of Mac, and if he would come home that night, when, just as she reached the well, she started back and uttered a quick cry of alarm.

There, seated on the small platform which surrounded the well, was an old man.

His clothes were tattered and torn, his feet were bare and sore from long travel, the hair on his uncovered head was frowsy and unkempt, his long, silvery beard straggled and matted; his countenance was sunken and hollow; he looked famished and faint, and altogether his appearance was well inclined to induce the fear which sprang up in the girl's bosom at sight of him.

She would have fled from the spot had he not in a trembling voice bid her remain.

"Do not be afraid of me, sweet miss," begged he piteously. "I would not harm a hair of your head."

The sound of his pleading, mournful voice caused Effie's footsteps to halt, and she blushed with shame at her foolish fear.

"I was so startled, sir," murmured she apologetically, going up to him. "You are poor and hungry; can I do anything for you?"

"A drink of water, miss," begged he; "my throat is dry and parched."

In a moment Effie had drawn up a bucket full of the sparkling cold water, and having emptied it into her pail, took a dipper, which was on a shelf attached to the well-house, and handed it to him brimful of the wholesome liquid.

The maniac, for it was no other than he, though now in one of his lucid spells, eagerly drained the vessel and handed it back to her.

"You are an angel, miss," said he thankfully. "I feel much refreshed now and will continue my wanderings."

He picked up a staff which was lying at his feet, and struggled to an upright position; but the effort caused him to reel and totter, and he would have fallen had not Effie rushed to his support.

"You are weak and feeble," said she gently. "Have you far to go?"

"Far!" repeated he vaguely. "I do not know."

"How?" asked she, somewhat surprised at this answer. "You do not know where you are going?"

"No, child. The cars brought me to this country, from whence I cannot remember. Since reaching here I have wandered many a mile, begging a crust of bread here and there, finding shelter sometimes under some hospitable roof, but oftener sleeping on the cold ground, with no covering except the dark vault of heaven. Thus I wander from place to place, seeking something for which my heart yearns, but never finding it."

"But what is it you seek?" asked she, a little curiously.

"I do not know," replied he wearily. "Perhaps it is a grave to rest my weary limbs forever."

An awed silence fell on the young girl at these words.

To her youthful mind and buoyant spirits the mere mention of death aroused an almost inexpressible horror, and she gazed into the face of the old man, whom she was supporting, with an indefinable dread as though she expected to see him sink down, a corpse at her feet.

"Effie! Effie!"

It was the voice of her mother calling to her from the distance; but the words themselves had a powerful effect on the old man.

"Where is she? Where is she?" cried he wildly, glancing about him with some of the old maniacal fire in his eyes. "It is she I seek! It is she I am looking for! She was the light of my home, the joy of my existence; but she left me and I cannot find her, I cannot find her!"

Tears were streaming from his eyes and his form quivered with emotion.

"I am Effie," murmured the young girl, deeply affected by her companion's words and manner.

"You are good and beautiful," replied he sadly, "but you are not she."

"Let me be the Effie for whom you are seeking," said she, tenderly folding her arm around his waist; "at least think I am she, and go with me to our house; you need rest and refreshment, and mother will, I am sure, give you both."

The old man began to murmur objections, but Effie would not listen to them, and taking up the pail of water with her disengaged hand, she guided his tottering footsteps to the cottage, on the threshold of which stood her mother, anxious at her long absence, and now surprised to see her return with an aged beggar.

A few words from Effie explained all, and the old man was cordially welcomed by Mary as well as by Bill and Jack Thompson, who had arrived while Effie was at the well.

The supper table was already spread, and the family seated themselves at the table; and after they had finished a substantial repast was given to the beggar.

They had thus been sitting in the room for an hour when they were agreeably surprised by the entrance of Mac and Snooksy, dripping with wet.

"All heaven couldn't keep us from coming home to-night," was Mac's cheery greeting, as he and his chum divested themselves of their soaked jackets. "We were detained by the investigations and examination and lots of other things they bothered us about, but the president gave us the permission to drive home in a special, and here we are. Do you know the news?"

"Not a syllable," replied Bill. "Is Velveten George captured?"

"You bet; and Scar-Faced Pedro, too!"

"Who's he?" asked Effie.

"I'll tell you all about it," said Mac, and then he related the various incidents with which the reader is already acquainted.

They were soon in bed sound asleep, and Mac off in the land of dreams, fancying himself again on his old locomotive in New Jersey, and again having a desperate struggle with the maniac. In his dream he thought the crazy man had thrown him on the floor of the cab, and, kneeling with one knee on his breast, was winding his long, bony fingers around his throat and choking him. The sensation seemed so real that he began to gasp and gurgle, and finally opening his eyes beheld to his horror that it was not all a dream.

The storm which had been raging furiously when he went to bed had died away, and the full moon shining through the window threw a weird and ghastly light on the livid face of the maniac, now, again in a delirium of fury. The lunatic had one knee pressed on the boy's chest, while his fingers were clutched around the lad's throat with a vise-like grasp.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DOUBLE ABDUCTION.

By the time the keepers of the jail awoke to a realization of their position, a sufficiently large hole had been made in the prison wall to permit of the entrance of the attacking party.

In they swarmed, shouting, howling and cursing, brandishing their knives and pistols and thoroughly frightening the already greatly demoralized guard.

A few pistol shots were fired by both sides, without,

however, doing much damage, and the keepers soon found themselves lying bound and gagged in the guard-room, with the door locked and bolted on them.

The rabble had possessed itself of the keys to the cells and outer door of the prison, and in a very short time all the prisoners were set at liberty.

The crowd now dispersed as rapidly as it had assembled, leaving the place dismantled, the cells empty and the keepers caged.

Estelle Mowbray had accompanied the assailants to the jail, though she waited at some distance until she was joined by Velveten George, Jimmy and Red-Handed Mike, upon their release.

They separated themselves from the gang, and having reached a secluded spot where they were both concealed from observation and sheltered from the storm which was still raging, though not so violently as before, Velveten George asked:

"What time is it?"

"Nearly midnight," replied Estelle.

"I wonder whether I could get to the depot in time to catch the midnight train for Los Angeles?"

"The Branch Road?"

"No; the opposition line."

"Why?"

"For two reasons. One is to put myself into communication with Sam Slocum, the president, who resides in Los Angeles, and the other to lay for that devil, Mac."

"But won't you be detected on the cars?"

"Hardly. There'll be but few passengers, and we'll keep shady."

"And Mr. Slocum, won't he deliver you up to the law?"

"He?" laughed the convict. "I'll tell you a secret," lowering his voice. "It was he who put me up to place obstructions across the track of the Branch Road. He didn't know that that just suited my own little game, and paid me handsomely for it. He's terribly jealous of the other road and especially envies them the possession of the boy engineer. He'd give anything to know that the brat was dead. But come on; we'll miss the train if we stand talking here."

After a few more words the precious pair parted company, Estelle proceeding to the house of Greasy Joe, where she donned her own habiliments and remained until morning before returning to her hotel. The convict, his son and Mike, hastening to the depot, too late, indeed, to catch the regular train, but in time to see the superintendent.

He, knowing the relations existing between the ex-convict and the president of the road, placed a locomotive at their disposal, and, as Mike knew how to run it, the precious trio were soon speeding at a dashing rate toward Los Angeles.

"Ah, ha!" screamed the maniac, "again I clutch you. Now your face will no longer mock me! You shall die—die!"

Mac caught hold of his assailant's wrists and sought to tear the cruel fingers from his throat. He also managed to utter a gasping cry, which awoke Snooksy.

The latter, comprehending with a glance the danger of his chum, threw himself on the lunatic and soon all three were rolling in a desperate struggle on the floor.

The noise and cries aroused Bill and Jack from their slumbers, and recognizing that it came from the boys' room, they rushed thither, but partly dressed, with revolvers in one hand and lighted tallow candles in the other.

The door was locked, but giving it a combined push they burst it open so suddenly that they toppled headlong into the room, tumbling over the struggling trio on the floor, and, to make matters worse, setting fire to the straw mattress on which the maniac had slept.

In the room below Mrs. Norton had arisen at the same time as her husband, and, having donned her clothes, was about to rush upstairs when a huge volume of smoke drove her back.

"My heavens!" shrieked she, "the house is on fire and they are all upstairs, and Effie is asleep in her room on the top floor! They will all be burnt to death!"

Through the blinding smoke there came rushing down the stairs at this moment the Spanish servant. She slept in a room next to Effie's.

"Where is Effie?" cried the mother.

"Has she not come down?" gasped the servant.

"No."

"Then she must be still in her room. I was too frightened to think of going to her."

With a wild cry of anguish the mother was about to rush

up the stairs in spite of flame and smoke, when Bill and Jack came hurrying down bearing the insensible form of the maniac between them.

"Where are the boys?" cried Mary, as she and the servant followed the men out of the burning building into the open air.

"They've gone up after Effie," replied Bill as he and Jack placed their burden on the ground. "This is bad business. The old man is the same lunatic who once before came near killing Mac. We had to knock him senseless to get him out of the burning room."

"Did he set the house on fire?"

"No, that was my own and Jack's cursed luck. Ah, there are the boys now with Effie!"

He directed his wife's attention to the window near the roof of the cottage, which looked out from the young girl's room.

At this window Mack and Snooksy had appeared, bearing in their arms the unconscious form of Effie, who, it seems, had fainted away in dead fright.

"Catch her, father!" cried Mac.

"Ready!" exclaimed Bill as he and Jack stood under the window with their arms outstretched.

Holding the girl for a moment suspended in the air, Mac let her drop. Both her father and Jack caught her, and laid her, uninjured, on the ground.

The boys, with their clothes and hair somewhat singed and their hands and faces blackened with soot and smoke, but having fortunately sustained no bodily injuries, now came rushing out of the burning building.

"Thank goodness!" cried Mac, as he shook hands with his foster-mother, "that we were in time to save Effie's life! A minute later and——"

He was interrupted by a wild cry from Bill.

"Gone! gone!" shrieked the father, pointing in anguish to the spot where but a moment before he had placed his unconscious child.

"Effie gone!" exclaimed all in concert. "Impossible!"

"It's true!" said Jack. "And the maniac's vamoosed, too!"

"I see it all!" fairly shrieked Mac. "He has stolen off with Effie!"

Leaving the once pretty cottage to burn to the ground, they all, even Mary and the servant included, spread out into the woods in chase of the maniac.

As usual Mac and Snooksy kept well together, and in their eagerness to regain possession of their loved companion, far outstripped the others in the hunt.

All this while there had been three spectators of this scene, who had kept themselves concealed in the woods, but noted everything.

These were Velvetten George, Jimmy and Mike. They had seen the glare of the conflagration, and had halted the engine to reconnoitre the scene.

"Now is our time!" whispered the convict. "After them; capture the brats and bring them on the locomotive. Then back to 'Frisco and thence to Pedro's flat. Follow me!"

Mac and Snooksy must have thought lightning struck them, when they suddenly received, each of them, a stunning blow on the back of the head, and before they could even cry out they found themselves thrown into the cab of an engine, which almost immediately thereafter was speeding at a terrific rate along the rails.

Neither the capturers nor captured, however, were aware of the fact that the maniac was clinging to the cow-catcher, with one hand, while with the other he held Effie's form pressed convulsively to his breast.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE CONFESSION.

It was already broad daylight when they reached the woods on the outskirts of San Francisco, and which were but a stone's throw from the secret entrance to Pedro's flat.

"Halt the engine here!" ordered Velvetten George. "We'll get out here and carry the brats to the flat."

The two men each grasped one of the unconscious lads and flinging them over their shoulders, like a package of goods, descended from the cab with Jimmy.

About an hour later the precious trio arrived with their victims at the flat, and were received with tumultuous applause by the ruffianly gang there assembled.

Placing the boys in one of the huts and bidding Mike and Jimmy to restore them to consciousness but at the same time to give them no chance to escape, Velvetten George proceeded to the residence of the chief, Scar-Faced Pedro.

He found the latter in conversation with a man, who although disguised to his business acquaintances, he easily recognized as Sam Slocum, the president of the opposition road.

"Hello, Sam!" exclaimed he, familiarly. "You here? I thought you were in Los Angeles."

"No, George," replied the other, "I remained in San Francisco last night on some business and came here this morning thinking to meet you here. If Pedro will excuse us I've got a little private matter which I wish to talk over with you."

"All right, gents," declared the Mexican, arising. "I'll leave yez together, an' if yer want any fine old bourbon you'll find the bottle in the closet, there."

Thus saying, he sauntered out of the room, leaving the plotters together.

Velvetten George got the bottle and a couple of glasses and placed them on the table, while his companion carefully closed and locked the door and then examined the windows, nooks and corners, and even poked his cane up the fireless chimney to make sure that there was no one near to overhear them.

"I guess we're alone," said he, resuming his seat, apparently satisfied with his investigation.

Had he, however, looked up the chimney he would have beheld therein the form of a man, who had been alone in the room before his coming, and who, seeing him approach with Pedro, and recognizing him, had with a half-muttered oath concealed himself in his present hiding place, where he could overhear every word that was being uttered.

"Well," exclaimed Slocum, raising the glass which the convict had filled for him, "here's luck. And now," continued he, after they had drained their glasses, "to business."

"It's a pretty long time," began he, musingly, as if recalling the memory of the past, "since we two were members of the same gang out in California here."

"Yes," said the other, "nigh on thirteen years."

"I was a reckless, devil-may-care young fellow then, and my father, despairing of ever reclaiming me, made a will, leaving all his fortune to my sister, with the mere proviso that should she die without heirs it was then to go to me. My father died soon after that, and my sister fell in love with and married a young miner named William Raymond, who had come out from the States some years previous to seek his fortune in the diggings.

"You can imagine how mad I was when I heard of this marriage, and my heart was filled with bitter hatred both against my sister and brother-in-law. But I had my revenge. I learned that my sister, ashamed of my ill-doings, had kept the knowledge that she had a brother a secret from her husband. That gave me the clue to my actions. I visited her by stealth and took care to circulate the rumor that she held private meetings with a stranger. I wanted to arouse his jealousy, to drive him to some act that would separate them forever. For a time my efforts were in vain, but after her child was born and my anonymous letters to him grew more and more impudent, his pent-up fury broke loose. He surprised us at an interview, the time and place of which I had communicated to him. He was beside himself with rage and indignation, and with cocked pistol rushed upon us. I threw myself into his arms and a desperate struggle for life and death ensued, in the midst of which I pulled the trigger of his weapon. A report followed, and, with a piercing shriek, my sister, shot through the heart, fell lifeless to the ground.

"Did this Raymond believe that he had killed his wife?"

"He did," replied Slocum; "and you can bet I strengthened him in that belief. I told him of the relation I held to the dead woman, and with apparent liberality promised to keep silent about the affair, and allow him to escape. He fled, and from that day to this I have never again beheld him."

There was certainly the sound of a groan at this juncture, in the chimney, but the men were too absorbed in the terrible tale to hear it.

"At the coroner's inquest, which was subsequently held, I gave a plausible version of the affair, and luckily for me, this was unexpectedly corroborated by one of the servants who had witnessed the scene, but not near enough to determine who had fired the shot. I got off scot free, while

warrants were issued for the apprehension of my brother-in-law for murder. But they never amounted to anything as the authorities could not find him."

"And you do not know whether he is still alive to-day?"

"I do not. At any rate, he was dead to the world; my sister was dead in fact, and nothing remained to keep my father's property from my possession but a weak, puny infant—their child."

"And that child you brought to me with instructions to bring him up as a thief and vagabond."

"Exactly. I might have had him put to death, but somehow I didn't quite fancy burdening my soul with any more stains of blood than were already there. All that was thirteen years ago. I had intended to ask you the last time we met what had become of him, but you know our interview was abruptly broken into. I ask you now, does he live?"

"He does."

Again that rustle in the chimney became evident, and this time even the villains heard it.

"Hark!" cried Slocum, starting up. "What was that?"

"Rats up the chimney, I believe."

"I'll smoke them out, then."

The self-confessed murderer gathered up a pile of dried leaves and chips of wood, which were lying beside the hearth, and having heaped them into a pile under the chimney, applied a lighted match to the mass.

"If there's anybody up there," said he, resuming his seat, "he'll soon yell to be put out. You say the brat lives. Where is he?"

"I've got him cooped up in a hut along with another youngster. I brought him up as a little snakesman, and for a time he was turning out all right; but then he fell in with Little Mac and became converted. The young rascal ain't fit to live any more."

"He must die!" said Slocum, in low but deliberate tones. "On the wealth which belongs to him I have prospered and grown rich. I will not surrender it up now."

The precious pair left the room and hardly had they done so when down the burning chimney came the man who had been hiding there.

He was almost suffocated with smoke, and his clothes were on fire in several places.

He, however, managed to extinguish the flames with his hands, and sinking on his knees raised his eyes toward the ceiling in fervent emotion.

As we gaze into the upturned tear-stained face we recognize the mysterious burglar who, it will be remembered, had, with Scar-Faced Pedro, feloniously entered Mr. Johnson's residence and had so luckily escaped.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE TRACK.

It would be a vain effort to attempt to depict the surprise, grief and sorrow of the so lately happy family at the disappearance not only of the maniac with Effie, but also the most mysterious one of Mac and Snooksy.

Daybreak found them in Los Angeles and with despairing hearts they got on board the train which it was Bill's and Jack's duty to run to San Francisco. Arrived at the metropolis, and luckily meeting Mr. Johnson, the president, at the depot, they confided their sad story to him.

"No matter about that burning of the cottage," said he, cheerfully. "I'll build another one, and as for the loss of your household property, I'll make that good. The main thing is to find the boys and Effie. Jack and Bill, you are released from further duty to-day. Come with me at once to the chief of police; we must consult with him about what is to be done."

The superintendent, who was a keen, far-seeing man, listened patiently to the tale related rather incoherently to him and then said:

An officer here interrupted the consultation with the announcement that a man wished to speak to the superintendent.

"I am very busy now," said the latter, "and cannot be disturbed. Tell him to call again."

"But he says his business is very important," rejoined the officer, "and requires immediate attention. He comes from Pedro's flat."

The last words acted like a charm.

"Pedro's flat!" cried the superintendent. "Send him up at once."

A moment later and the same man, who a few hours before had been an unseen listener of the conversation between Velvetten George and Slocum, entered the private office, pale, breathless, with disheveled hair, and still in his singed and tattered garments, and throwing himself at the feet of the surprised superintendent, exclaimed:

"I surrender myself to justice!"

The chief of police eyed him for a moment, and then springing to his feet, cried:

"William Raymond!"

"I am he," replied the man.

"The murderer of your wife?"

"No!" cried Raymond, arising and glancing proudly and straightforwardly at the superintendent. "I am innocent, and I can prove it."

He rapidly related the substance of the interview he had overheard, and also the fate which awaited the heroic lads.

"William Raymond," said the superintendent, sternly, "you will for the present consider yourself a prisoner. I will, however, so far credit your story as to put a detachment of police in your charge. You are to lead them through the secret passage into the flat. They will be under orders to shoot you down at the first sign of treachery on your part. Do you understand the terms?"

"I do; and it is all I ask. My fidelity shall be proven to you by the rescue of the lads and the capture of the real murderer of my sainted wife. I cannot, however, introduce the police into the flat during the daytime. We would surely be discovered. An hour before the dawn is the most favorable time. Have the force ready and I will lead them."

"And we will accompany you!" cried the others in concert.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRIAL AND SENTENCE.

"Hello, mammy! How d'yer feel?"

Estelle Mowbray glanced up from the afternoon paper, in which she was reading a detailed account of the attack on the jail, and beheld standing before her the funniest-looking specimen of a negro boy that she had ever laid eyes on.

"So it's you, Jimmy, is it?" said she, not particularly elated with the discovery.

"The Twister, you bet!"

"And why do you come here in this disguise?"

"To keep from being nabbed by the cops, in course; deir on der lookout for me and dad, but, Lor' bless yer suol, I passed right under deir noses an' dey didn't know me from a genuine nig. Dem is fly cops; dey orter be in New York. Oh, yes, I guess so. Just the cheese for der boys."

"Well, now that you're here," inquired she, rather impatiently, "what do you want?"

"A little whisky straight an' a cigar—Havana, if yer've got dem."

"Come, come; don't fool with me. What's your errand?"

"Oh, dad sent me here for ter tell yer ter come right over ter the flat ter see the circus."

"Circus!"

"Yes; we've nabbed Little Mac an' Snooksy, an' we're goin' ter try 'em by sundown. So there's just time for you ter git over there."

"With you!" sneered she. "I wouldn't be seen beside you in the street, even if you were not in this miserable disguise."

"Oh, of course not!" sneered Jimmy. "Yer too high-toned; but yer got a black heart, and though yer are me mother, I hate yer, I do, an' I ain't afraid ter tell yer neither."

Shaking his fist at her he rushed out of the room in time to avoid being struck by a book which the angry woman flung after him.

"So he hates me, does he?" hissed she when she was alone. "Well, I return that passion a hundred fold. I hate him and his father. Their existence links me to the life I would fain forget. It is only after their death that I can with perfect safety assume again my station in society in New York. As long as the true heir to all my wealth lives, I dare not put them out of the way; but he, once dead, they, too, shall follow him to the grave."

Opening a secret drawer of her desk she took therefrom

the vial of poison which we have already described in a former chapter.

She hid the vial in her bosom and wrapped a long, dark mantle around her, which effectually concealed her form.

Throwing the hood of her mantle over her head, she issued from the room and house.

The setting sun was throwing its last rays through the paneless windows into the hut where Mac and Snooksy were imprisoned. They had, indeed, been restored to consciousness, but their hands and feet were still firmly bound.

"Say, Mac," asked Snooksy, disconsolately, "what do you think they're going to do to us?"

"Kill us, I suppose," replied Mac, gloomily.

"A tear, which, by reason of his hands being tied, he was unable to brush away, coursed slowly down his cheek.

"Hello! yer cryin', are yer? So yer proud spirit's been broken at last. Well, it's about time. I say, Snooksy, why don't yer snivel, too, yer his pal, yer know, curse yer!"

It was Jimmy, who had just entered the hut and made these unfeeling remarks. By way of emphasizing his words he gave Snooksy, who was lying bound and helpless on the floor, a kick in the ribs.

"Oh, if I could only lay my hands on you!" cried the ill-treated lad.

"But yer can't!" taunted the young imp of Satan, giving another kick. "'Cause why? Yer hands are tied. But no matter, yer won't want 'em much longer, nor anything else for the matter of that. I've been sent here by the lord high cockolorum, which is Scar-Faced Pedro, for ter summon the two of yez to his court."

"A court?" inquired Mac, with interest.

"Yes, an' a bang-up one, too, an' don't yer forget it. Ole Pedro's judge, an' dad an' me's on the jury. Say, don't yer want ter see me?"

He held out his hand in a most tantalizing manner, while he screwed up his face and winked his eye in a way most laughable to behold.

In spite of their melancholy position, Mac and Snooksy could not for the life of them refrain from laughing aloud.

"Oh, yes, in a good humor, are yer?" grimly exclaimed Jimmy. "I guess you won't find it much of a laughing matter when yer stand up afore the bar, by which I don't mean a drinkin' bar, neither."

He chuckled at his own funny conceit, and then having summoned two men into the hut, said:

"See here, these chaps refuse to go to court, which it would be contempt of court, only they can't walk, seein' that their feet are tied. Now, you fellers just hist 'em over your shoulders an' follow me."

The boys made no resistance; it would have been utterly futile if they had; and, besides, this talk about a court had awakened their curiosity, and they were bodily carried into the room where the ex-convict had had his interview with Sam Slocum.

At the table, which had been shifted to one corner, sat the leader of the outlaws, with a look of grim dignity on his ugly and scarred visage.

The bonds were removed from the prisoners' legs so that they could stand upright, and then the veriest farce of a judicial trial was solemnly enacted.

After the mock jury had brought in a verdict, Scar-Faced Pedro arose in his seat and thus addressed the boys:

"Young fellers, the jury have found yer guilty, an' the court, which is me, is a-goin' ter pass sentence on yer. It is that yer be lugged back ter yer prison an' kept there until sunrise ter-morrer, when yer ter be taken out an' shot, and may the devil fly away wid yer souls!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

To say that the lads received their death sentence with all the fortitude of Roman heroes would, doubtlessly, be highly flattering to their moral courage, but unfortunately it would not be the truth.

Unlike the majority of story-book heroes, they were greatly alarmed at the fate to which they had been doomed, and broke out in loud and tearful lamentations for mercy.

But that was an unknown quality in the breasts of their captors, and the boys were carried shrieking and struggling back to the hut, which constituted their prison.

This unpleasant duty over the outlaws determined to spend the approaching night in wild revelry and bacchanalian carousals.

At midnight all the sisters, with the exception of Estelle, who, though she had shouted, laughed and sang the loudest, had confined herself entirely to wine, and drank but little of that, were too drunk to know what they themselves or anybody else were doing.

Velveteen George was sitting beside her, with his arm around her waist, making love to her with all his old-time ardor, while Jimmy, apparently oblivious of the defiant words he had hurled at her that afternoon, was reclining in her lap in a semi-stupefied state.

"Now is my time!" thought she, and placing her handkerchief to her bosom she skillfully drew forth a tiny vial and concealed it within its folds.

Next, releasing herself from her husband's embrace, she raised a glass full of wine in one hand and then, as if by accident, dropped the handkerchief to the floor.

The vial, wrapped up in its folds, neither broke nor gave forth any sound.

Still holding the glass in her hand she stooped under the table and there, with the rapidity of lightning, poured some drops of the poison into the wine, and then replaced the vial in her bosom.

"George," said she, after she had arisen from her stooping position, "to-morrow you and Jimmy and I will together go far away from here. You will give up your old associations and begin life anew. I will devote myself to the education of my child. We will make a real happy family together."

"Zat we will, my dear!" cried he, in thick, hardly intelligible utterances.

"And let us pledge our future welfare in this glass of wine."

"All right, my dear," hiccupped he, taking the proffered glass. "Anything to oblige."

He drained the goblet one-third and then handed it back to her.

"Now it's Jimmy's turn," said she.

The boy was almost asleep, but she managed to pour the remainder of the wine down his throat, which he mechanically swallowed, and almost immediately thereafter went sound asleep.

The carousals continued until one by one the parties thereto sank into drunken sleep, some lying with their heads on the table, but the majority were stretched at full length on the floor.

Even Estelle fell into a gentle doze.

At daybreak some outlaws, who were not of sufficient high degree to participate in the orgie, entered the room and found all the inmates sound asleep.

Sundry sound shakings and rubbings were needed to arouse the drunken party, and it was only after they had literally soaked their heads in the water of the limpid stream which flowed through the flat that they were sufficiently sobered to set to work at the duty of the hour.

"Let them brats be brought to the plateau," ordered Pedro; "an' have the Hangman's Brigade drawn up. We'll be there directly."

"Count me in as one of them!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"You?" asked Pedro, surprised at this request.

"Oh, yes," rejoined Velveteen George, "let the boy have his sport."

Jimmy, having gained his point, hastened ahead to the hut, where the doomed lads had just received notice that the hour of their death had arrived.

The boys, bound as they were, were slung across the shoulders of the brawny ruffians and borne to what was to be the scene of their death, like lambs to slaughter.

This plateau or level was an open piece of ground hedged in on all sides, except the one leading to the flat by a dense thicket or dwarfed pines and underbrush.

A pole had been imbedded in the centre of this space and to this pole the victims were bound, side by side.

Estelle, herself, advanced with a couple of handkerchiefs to bandage the boys' eyes, but they proudly shook their heads.

"All right, then!" cried Scar-Faced Pedro.

"One!"

The brigade cocked their muskets and raised them to the shoulder.

"Two!"

Six barrels pointed steadily at the boys' hearts.
"Fire!"

The command came not from the leader of the outlaws but from the surrounding thickets; a volley of musketry followed, and every one of the Hangman's Brigade sank either dead or wounded to the ground.

The effect was paralyzing on the outlaws, and before they could recover from it, with many a shout and huzza a detachment of soldiers, one hundred men strong, rushed in upon them.

"At last, murderer, we are face to face!"

The words were addressed to Sam Slocum, and, turning, he confronted the mysterious burglar—William Raymond.

CHAPTER XIX.

VICE DEFEATED.

The struggle between the outlaws and the troops was short, quick and decisive.

Scar-Faced Pedro was the only one who had preferred death to capture, and he had blown his brains out with his own pistol.

In the rear guard of the soldiers came Bill Norton, Jack Thomson, Mary and the others, and they confined their attention to freeing Mac and Snooksy from the pole, a proceeding which took but a few moments to perform.

At the pole were our friends, convulsively hugging and embracing the rescued boys; grouped in the centre were the captured outlaws, as also Estelle and Velveteen George, surrounded by a cordon of police; while in the foreground Sam Slocum and William Raymond still stood glaring at each other.

The latter sprang upon his enemy and bore him to the ground, then pressing one knee upon his breast he caught him by the throat and cried:

"Confess, Sam Slocum, as once already you did to your confederate, that it was you who murdered your sister, my wife; confess, or by heaven I'll strangle you as I would a dog!"

"I—I confess!" gasped the miserable man.

He drew a long bowie-knife and made a savage lunge at his brother-in-law, but the latter had divined the action and nimbly avoided the thrust.

The wretched man, seeing himself foiled, turned the dagger's point toward his own breast, and sank a bleeding, dying man on the mass of the slain.

"Daddy!"

It was Jimmy's voice, but faint and weak. He was not yet dead, but he had only a few minutes still to live.

"Daddy!" gasped he, feebly. "My goose's cooked; but I don't care. I'd just as lief die now as any other time. You won't forget me, daddy, will you?"

"Never!" replied the convict, huskily. "I've only a short time to live, but I'll never forget you!"

"Where is mammy?"

"Here. Estelle, won't you take leave of your dying child?"

"Bah! what's the use?" replied she, unfeelingly. "We'll follow him soon enough. You'll be with him in the grave within an hour."

"Hell hound!" cried he, making one leap and springing upon her. "False, treacherous woman; poisoner, murderer! Thus—thus receive your merited doom!"

With wild, ungovernable fury, he threw her on the ground and literally trampled her to death before the soldiers could interfere and drag him away.

It is not known whether the hour had come for the poison to produce its dread effect or whether the excitement under which he labored hastened its action. At any rate, he suddenly became deadly faint and sank, dying, into the arms of those who had torn him from his victim.

"Where is Little Mac?" gasped he.

"Here I am," exclaimed our hero as with Snooksy he advanced toward the dying convict.

"Why, do not be afraid," whispered he as he caught the boy's hand in his own. "I cannot harm you now. For months I have been on your track to kill you. That woman commissioned me to do so. She feared you because you are the child of her late husband, George Mowbray and Effie Raymond, and the true heir to all the wealth your father left."

A violent paroxysm succeeded these words and when the convulsions ceased the wretched, sinful man was no more.

An intense silence succeeded, which was at length interrupted by Mr. Johnson, who formed one of the party.

"Come," said he, "this is no place for us. We will go into one of the huts and talk over these strange and startling events, while the soldiers will enter the dead and remove the prisoners."

When they were all assembled in the room, which had been the scene of the carousal of the previous night, these papers were read by Mr. Johnson amid general silence and attention on the part of the rest. What they contained is already known to our readers.

When he had concluded, William Raymond stepped forward and said:

"The ways of Providence are truly inscrutable. Seventeen years ago I left my father and my sister and came here to seek my fortune. What happened to me since then you all know. Since the day I left home I heard nothing of those I left behind me, until this minute. Mac, your mother was my sister, as sure as there's a heaven above us. I am your uncle."

"My uncle!" cried Mac, in wonder.

"Yes; and I have still another surprise in store for you. Snooksy, your chum, your companion, is my own son William, and your cousin."

"You are my father!" exclaimed Snooksy.

The two boys impulsively rushed into the man's outstretched arms and he clasped them both to his breast.

Bill shortly said:

"Let us return at once to San Francisco. Mr. Johnson will, I am sure, give temporary accommodations to my wife and servant, and then we will make up a party to scour the surrounding country, and not cease in our efforts until we find Effie and the maniac."

Mr. Johnson gave his immediate consent to this arrangement, and the party at once set out upon the return.

They walked through the thickets for some time and then, when almost at the suburbs of the city, Mary suddenly cried out:

"Hark!"

All stopped and listened.

Plain and distinct came the voice of a young girl singing.

"'Tis Effie!" cried the mother, sinking on her knees. "Thank heaven, she lives and is near!"

CHAPTER XX.

VIRTUE TRIUMPHANT.

The song led them to the decayed trunk of one of the giant trees in California—trees to be found in this part of the world, and whose dimensions are oftentimes equal to those of a house.

"She must be inside that tree," said Bill.

Mac and Snooksy—the reader will pardon us for thus continuing to call the latter by the name most familiar to us—hastened ahead, and soon a shout from them told the opening had been found.

It was as large as an ordinary door and permitted the whole party to enter at once.

"Effie!"

"Mother!"

The young girl was clasped in her mother's arms. She then told the brief story and pointed to the form of the maniac, stretched on a bed of leaves.

"And what induced you to sing our favorite songs?" asked Mac.

"The hope that you might be searching for me," replied she, while a rosy blush suffused her cheeks, "and hearing me sing might come to my rescue. I dared not otherwise attract attention, you know."

They had all been gathered around the young girl while she was telling her story—that is, all save William Raymond.

He, at sight of the maniac, had given utterance to a half-stifled cry, and sank on his knees beside the old man.

Now when Bill and Jack made a movement as if approaching the sleeping lunatic, he raised his pale and tear-stained face and exclaimed:

"Back, back; the man who touches him dies!"

"Why?" asked Bill, surprised at this utterance.

"Because," replied Raymond, in a voice husky with emotion, "this man is my father."

They grouped themselves in silent awe around the lunatic, whose lamp of life was, indeed, about to be extinguished.

The old man's eyes unclosed and their first glances rested on the features of his son.

The gaze was not a maniac's wild stare, but one of tender love and sweet recognition.

"William!" muttered the dying man, brokenly, "my son, my first-born! Have I been dreaming? Has the past been but the baseless vision conjured up by sleep? Where is your sister? Where is Effie?"

"She is in heaven, father," gently returned his son.

"Dead!" cried he, somewhat excitedly, while his feeble frame shook and quivered as with the palsy. "Dead! Then it is true what they told me. She left her father, her old, grief-stricken father, sorrowing for his absent son, and having only her to comfort and console him; she left him for a stranger's love, and when that stranger deceived and deserted her she would not come back; she would not trust and confide in her poor old father, who would have laid down his life for her. She's dead—dead! dead!"

He buried his face in his hands and wept aloud.

"Father," murmured Raymond gently, "it is true that she is dead, but her son lives."

"I am her son," chokingly exclaimed Mac, dropping on his knees beside the dying man.

He gazed at him earnestly for some moments, then bending forward and pressing a kiss on the lad's forehead, he exclaimed:

"Yes, you are her son. In your features my Effie lives again. I have seen you before. You are one of the phantoms of my dream; but the night has passed, it is daylight now. I bless you, my child. Your mother was good, was true. Others wronged her, but she was sinless, for she could not sin. She is an angel now, and you must always think of her as such. You will promise me this, my child?"

"I promise," replied Mac, with quivering lip.

"Then you will be forever blessed. William, I am fast passing away; earth is vanishing from my eyes and I see a vision of glory before me."

Supported by his son, the dying man struggled to his feet.

His face was upturned toward the sky, and his features transfixed by a calm and holy joy.

"I see her face!" cried he, in joyous tones. "I recognize her. At last I find her again. It is my child! Effie, Effie, I am coming!"

His last words were fairly shrieked out; and before their echo had died away his spirit had fled, and his son held but the cold, lifeless remains.

A week later they laid him in the grave beside the daughter he had so loved, and simply added his name to the one inscribed on the headstone, to mark his last resting place.

The legal formalities to establish Mac in his rights and to prove the innocence of William Raymond, were gone through as speedily as circumstances permitted it. The Boy Engineer was declared to be the rightful heir of the vast estate left behind by his father, James Mowbray, while his uncle, who was also appointed his guardian, took charge of the property of Sam Slocum, deceased, in trust for his son, William Raymond, Jr., otherwise known to us as Snooksy.

Both the latter and Mac are attending college, to perfect themselves for the profession of civil engineers.

Bill and Mary Norton, with Effie, reside in the Fifth Avenue mansion, once the residence of the fashionable Mrs. Estelle Mowbray. Jack Thompson and his family often visit them, and when the boys are home on vacation, you may be sure that the house rings with merry shouts.

The further history of Mac is still behind the curtain of the future, for the events which we have depicted are of but recent date, but when that curtain comes to be lifted it will be found that as a man he will have more than fulfilled the bright promises of his youth, and that the reward which ever attends true merit and patient endurance will only add another laurel to those he has gained as the "Boy Engineer."

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RED CROSS'S WAR AID PLAN FOR SCHOOLS.

As the result of the formation of a junior department of the American Red Cross, 22,000,000 school children of America have an opportunity to become active workers in the Red Cross. The plan for this organization was worked out by Dr. Henry Noble MacCracken, president of Vassar College, and Dr. Anna Hedges Talbot of the New York State Department of Education.

Although the junior department of the Red Cross is only a month old, 5,600 scholars in Plainfield, N. J., have been enrolled, and arrangements made for the enrolment of the 32,000 public school children of Buffalo. The movement is not limited to public schools. Private and parochial schools are included and an effort is now being made to enlist them for war work with the Red Cross.

The children enlisted in the Junior Membership and School Activities of the Red Cross—that is the official name of the junior department—will be able to give definite service. Whatever work they accomplish will be done during school hours. This work will be carried on in all classes from the kindergarten up through the high school.

TO HELP FRENCH CHILDREN.

Some of the work will be in behalf of the children abroad. Little Americans will make clothes for little Frenchmen—black sateen aprons worn by both boys and girls in the French schools, petticoats, cotton chemises and capes. They will reconstruct old garments of grown-ups. Bringing the cast-off clothing of their parents to school, they will sterilize and cut it down.

They will rejuvenate even stockings, for the destitute little French children who have gone barefooted through the winter are thankful for the chance to walk on seamy soles. As the French children are always eager to give thanks for any kindness, each child will sew his own name and address in every garment and will doubtless receive in return a letter of gratitude from the small recipient on the other side.

The young Red Cross workers will make scrapbooks both for children and for soldiers in hospitals. They will do such plain knitting as comforters—and even the boys, like Robert Louis Stevenson, find knitting a fascinating occupation.

JAMS AND PRESERVES FOR SOLDIERS.

Children in manual training departments will make and repair boxes both for the shipping of their own goods and for that of other Red Cross chapters. They will make splints, crutches, wooden knitting needles. They will make soap moulds with the name of the school cut in the mould so that it

will be stamped on every piece of soap. As for the soap itself, members of the chemistry classes will make it with surplus fats brought from their own homes.

Domestic science students will put up jellies, jams and preserves. As shipping is a serious problem, the Red Cross does not know yet how much of this kind of delicacy can be sent to the other side.

It will, however, find a welcome in American cantonments, Canadian hospitals, and with our own soldiers as they return from the front. Boys will make trench candles by cutting eight columns of newspaper, rolling two of these very tightly together, folding the other six around them loosely, tying the whole together, and soaking it in paraffin.

These are some of the methods for helping which the Red Cross will suggest in the manual it is now preparing.

As many children are not able to raise even the twenty-five cents necessary for membership they will be enrolled in the junior department by schools and not by individuals. Any school that raises a supply fund which is the equivalent of twenty-five cents apiece for every child in the school is entitled to become junior auxiliary and all the children have the right to wear the regular \$1 membership button of the Red Cross.

Plainfield was the first town to take up the plan of the junior department, and Buffalo the second, instead of waiting for each school to raise enough money for membership. Plainfield, with a whirlwind campaign, raised \$1,400, which enrolls every one of the 5,600 children. Inquiries on how to conduct a campaign are coming in from Texas, Alaska and every part of the United States.

Dr. MacCracken is national director of junior membership. His office is in the national headquarters of the Red Cross in Washington, D. C.

SODA FOUNTAIN ECONOMIES.

One cent a day wasted by every soda fountain employee in the country means a loss of \$5,000 a day, says the Soda Fountain. Soda fountain men can save, by preventing the drip of syrup from faucets, seeing that perishable soda ingredients do not spoil, and using care in other directions.

Soda fountains now serve many articles of food as well as drinks. The use of cooking oils and butter substitutes is urged instead of butter and lard.

The use of loaf sugar instead of granulated is recommended where patrons help themselves, as in sweetening coffee, because there is no waste by spilling or wetting. Where fresh fruit is served at soda fountains, on the contrary, powdered sugar is best, as it dissolves immediately.

OUT FOR MONEY

—OR—

A POOR BOY'S CHANCE IN A BIG CITY

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XVI (Continued).

Mrs. Mulligan, in order to make up for Kitty's fault and also to return a favor, invited Phil and Bess and Mr. and Mrs. Matthews to a Christmas party in honor of Bess on Saturday night, promising to have a Christmas tree, and to make the day one to be remembered.

"It's not an iligant mansion Oi hov, nor yet a cozy Harlem flat," the good woman said in extending the invitation, "but yez will be welkim an' av I had the opery house to entertain yez in I wudn't be any the gladder to see yez."

Phil went home early that afternoon, and they all started down-town by the subway shortly after dark, so as to be home in good season.

It was snowing when they started, but Bess had a warm coat and a big hood which kept the wind and cold away from her, and Phil carried her to the station.

When they reached the bridge the boy picked the child up in his arms, and carried her up to the street, the snow at that time being quite heavy.

As he reached the park some one stepped suddenly forward, clutched him by the arm, and said:

"It'll be worth your while, my boy, to pay me for what I know about that child."

Bess cried out in alarm, but Phil, who recognized the old woman, said sharply:

"And it'll be wiser for you to keep out of the way, Judy, if you don't want to go up to the island again."

"I know who she is, Phil, and I'll tell you if you pay me."

"You may be made to tell without being paid," said Phil. "Get out of the way, you miserable creature. I don't want to have anything to do with you."

"Give me something for my Christmas, Phil, that's a good boy," whined the old woman.

"Here, then," said Phil, taking a quarter from his pocket, and putting it into the crone's hand, "and see that you don't spend it for drink."

"Ha-ha; you could make a fortune out of that child if you'd only listen to me," piped the old woman, in shrill tones.

"Maybe I might," said Phil. "Come on, Mr. Matthews; come on, Mrs. Jim, they'll be waiting for us. Don't be afraid, Bess, I'm not going to let the old woman get hold of you."

Then they hurried across the street, and were

soon at Mrs. Mulligan's, where their welcome was as hearty as the good woman had promised.

There was a Christmas tree in the little parlor, bright with lights and tinsel, and under it was a big new doll for Bess, while hung upon its branches was something for every one there.

Butts acted as Santa Clause, and distributed the presents while Kitty kept so close to him that it seemed as if she were afraid he would run away.

At last they sat down to supper, Kitty sitting between Butts and Phil, Bess close to Phil, and Mrs. Mulligan presiding and beaming hospitably from every line of her broad face.

In the midst of the meal there was a knook at the door, and then, as on former occasion, in walked Hiram Maynard.

"Merry Christmas, folks," he said. "I suppose I'm welcome."

"Then yez hov another suppose comin' to yez," said Mrs. Mulligan, "for ye're not."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT PHIL OVERHEARD.

Hiram came in, shook the snow from his coat and hat, closed the door, and said

"Quite a family party, isn't it? You've added one or two, missus, since I was here. Boarders, ma'am?"

"It's nothin' to ye who they are, ye blarneyin' maraudher," said Mrs. Mulligan. "I hov a welkim as big as all outdures for me fri'nds, but not the laste schrap av wan for a vilyan like ye, so the sooner yez tak yerself off the betther."

"Beat it, ye old stuff," said Butts.

"Get out o' here," added Kitty. "No one wants yer."

"Better take the hint and get out, Hiram, while you can," spoke up Phil. "It's not far to the Oak street police station, and I can send Butts out by the front way."

"Don't seem to want me, any of you, do you?" replied Hiram, with a laugh.

"No; you're a bad, wicked man," said Bess, "and you ought to be taken up. Go away, you nasty fellow. We don't want you."

"Butts," said Phil, "just take a run around to the——"

"It isn't necessary," interrupted Hiram. "I've got some information for you, Mr. Phil, that I thought you might like to tell your high-toned friends on Christmas, but I want money for it."

"I'm out of money, and can't pay for your information," answered Phil.

"Not'n, doin', boss," said Butts, "so you better skip."

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

Adherents of the Darwinian theory of man's descent see additional evidence in its support in the announcement that "Joe," a pet monkey belonging to Frank A. Ubel, at St. Paul, Minn., had just submitted to a successful operation for appendicitis. The monkey's ailment was diagnosed by Humane Society physicians, and under an anesthetic its appendix was removed.

Boneless beef is now being shipped from the British colonies for army supplies and effects considerable saving in ocean freight. The bones are trimmed out of the beef before shipment, reducing the weight 20 per cent in some cases, permitting more compact stowing in the coolers, and leaving the bones near districts where beef animals are raised, to be used for fats, fertilizer, and other by-products.

In training aerial marksmen to shoot straight, the British government makes use of small target balloons which are manufactured in large quantities. These balloons are made in two sections, so that when one section is punctured by a successful shot from the gun of the aerial apprentice the balloon remains in the air, permitting a second hit, and thus doubling the life of the target. An electric air pump is being used to fill the balloons.

American veterans resident in Germany and Austria, whose pensions were interrupted by the break in relations between the United States and those countries, will soon begin again to receive regular payments. The Spanish embassy at Berlin has agreed to undertake the work, after each case has been passed upon by the American legation at Berne. Proof will be required that the person receiving the pension actually is unable to return to the United States.

Through systematic observance of the food pledge, the University Club of Chicago is effecting savings of a ton of flour and 2 tons of meat monthly, with large economies in sugar, butter, eggs, milk, cream, lard, and poultry. Portions in the dining room have been reduced to effect these savings. Tuesday has been made a meatless day for members and employees. Pork and bacon have been eliminated as a garnish for other meats, and no veal, baby lamb, suckling pig or squab poultry are served. Announcements of food saving are published together with a roll of honor of club members who have joined the armed forces of the Nation.

In view of the bumper corn crop this year, some figures published in an implement paper are interesting. They show what becomes of our corn crop.

On a basis of 2,700,000,000 bushels, 500,000,000 are consumed in the industries and the rest on the farms. Nine per cent of the total crop is ground by mills, $1\frac{1}{2}$ is made into starch and corn sugar, less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is used for making distilled and malt liquors, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is exported, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is fed to horses and mules in towns. One-fourth of the whole crop is fed to horses and mules on farms, another fourth to hogs, about 9 per cent. to beef cattle, $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to dairy cattle, $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to poultry, 2 per cent. to sheep, $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is used for human food, and less than 1 per cent. furnishes seed for the new crop.

Owing to the shortage of tin cans through war conditions, the largest producers of motion picture film stock in the United States have recently notified their customers that the prompt shipment of this raw material cannot be guaranteed in the future. They have also urged all producing plants to return the empty containers they have on hand, for which a liberal price will be paid. How many tin cans are lying about in studios can perhaps be surmised by one typical instance: Following the call of the film manufacturers, one producing organization searched its premises and found 8,142 cans, each with a capacity of 2,000 feet of film. These cans represented the raw stock used at this studio in a little over two years, or a total of 16,284,000 feet. When crated, the cans made twelve truck loads, and it is said that when they were converted into money they represented a small fortune.

Along with the usual types of electric heaters which make their appearance each year upon the approach of the winter season, there are a number of original types available for the coming cold weather. One of the present offerings is made in the form of a copper bowl or reflector, in the center of which is mounted a spiral heating coil. The bowl is provided with a pedestal which, as in the case of the conventional electric fan, supports it at any angle. Indeed, the new device is strongly suggestive of the electric fan, since its heat can be thrown in any direction by adjusting the bowl. Still another type is made in the form of the common round gas stoves, with a diameter of about seven inches and a height of 21 inches. It provides about six square feet of heating surface, and only weighs 12 pounds. Odd is the remaining type made with the heating surface spread out in one plane. In the smaller size there is three square feet of heating surface. The length of the radiator is 20 inches and the height 16 inches. Its weight is only six pounds.

NEWS OF THE DAY

MAY SOON LICENSE CATS.

The City Council of Three Rivers, Wis., is seriously contemplating the adoption of a cat ordinance—an ordinance which will require the licensing of every cat in the city and also require the cats to wear a collar. It was found that each cat in a city kills an average of ninety birds in a year, which would mean the killing of about 50,000 birds a year in Three Rivers, based upon its cat population—a pretty expensive luxury.

BERLIN BARS SMOKING BY ALL UNDER 16.

The Berlin police have prohibited smoking by persons under sixteen years of age and the sale of tobacco to such persons.

The prohibition is inspired not alone in the interest of the youths, but also of the older smokers, who, on account of the shortage of tobacco, are now forced to form lines in front of the tobacconists to obtain the strictly limited allowance of cigars and cigarettes permitted them daily.

JACKRABBIT RACES AUTOMOBILE.

George Stone, of Humboldt, Iowa, recently was driving his auto along the Air Line road when the light showed a jackrabbit. Stone increased his pace and the rabbit increased its going.

Taking no unfair advantage, Stone kept to a straight course, as did the rabbit, its long legs stretched to its fullest extremities.

It was a fine race, and at the three-quarter mile post the machine shot ahead and jack left the road. The speedometer showed forty miles.

SURGERY CAN CURE CROOKS.

"Fifty per cent. of the criminals in this country under thirty years of age can be restored to good citizenship under proper surgical attention."

Judge George W. Bridgeman of Benton Harbor, Mich., made that statement at the dinner of the American Association of Official Surgeons in the Hotel La Salle, Chicago, Ill.

"Seventy-five per cent. of the criminals brought into the courts of this country are between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four years, and 80 per cent. of them suffer from physical disability," said Judge Bridgeman. "In most of these cases this disability is responsible for mental disability, manifested in crime, and it is capable of correction."

URGES EATING VETCH SEEDS.

The eating of vetch seed by the people of Oregon that more beans may be sent to the soldiers of the Allies was urged as a part of patriotism by Miss Ruth Corbett, conservation agent for Lane and Douglas counties, at the Lane County Fair.

Miss Corbett demonstrated various manners in which the seed may be prepared for the table. She called attention to the fact that vetch seed costs about one-third as much as beans.

"The people of Oregon can greatly increase the supply of beans available for the soldiers by eating vetch seed," she said. "The troops are not used to vetch and they are to beans. Besides, the government would not be inclined to experiment with a new food in time of war."

Miss Corbett also urged the people of Lane County to can poultry on account of the high price of feed, demonstrating methods.

"The cockerels especially should be killed and canned, for they will eat their heads off during the winter at the present price of feed," she said.

OLD MAN STRANGLES WILDCAT.

In a desperate battle with an 80-pound wildcat he found raiding his chicken-coop early one recent morning, Serge Koreloff, seventy years old, a Russian fisherman living in the Japanese village near Santa Monica, Cal., fought the animal with his bare hands and came off victor.

To-day the pelt of the cat is nailed on Koreloff's door as evidence of the fierce struggle, in which the marauder was choked to death as it clawed wildly at the aged Russian.

For several nights Koreloff had been losing chickens from his yard, and he determined to stand guard to catch the thief.

Just before dawn he fell asleep, but he was soon awakened by a noise in the yard. Seizing his gun he rushed from the house and saw the wildcat. He fired and missed, and the huge cat sprang at him.

Koreloff dropped his rifle and caught the beast by the throat and a hind leg. As his fingers fastened on the windpipe of the animal, the cat clawed him madly, inflicting deep lacerations on the man's legs and body.

When neighbors arrived, attracted by the shot and by the noise of the desperate struggle, they found Koreloff breathless and bleeding, standing over the lifeless form of the feline.

The hardy Russian, who is six feet and two inches tall and unusually muscular, refused all offers of medical aid.

Peeling off his clothes, he plunged into the surf. When he emerged from the water he explained to the crowd that had gathered that the salt water would stop the bleeding of his wounds and prevent infection.

Koreloff pointed to the fact that the hide of the wildcat had neither a knife wound or bullet-hole in it as proof of his weaponless victory in the primitive battle.

HUSTLING JOE BROWN

—OR—

THE BOY WHO KEPT THE TOWN CLOCK

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XIX.

JOE'S WONDERFUL SUCCESS.

This increased as Joe began to talk about Colonel Redding's idea of leasing the Wapamsett works to a new company.

At last he had said his say, and had not once been interrupted.

"Mr. Brown," said Grimes, then, "did you recognize the man who went out of this office a few minutes ago?"

"I did, sir," replied Joe. "He was P. H. Dodger, the president of the rifle trust."

"Exactly. Now let me tell you something. That man is one of the biggest rascals who ever went unhung. For five years I have been looking for a chance to trap him, and now, if what you say is true, that chance has come. You started out on a bold mission, boy, but fortune has favored you. They say that fools jump in where wise men dare not tread. You have certainly jumped into the right place. I will help you organize your company, if such a thing can possibly be brought about."

Joe listened to Mr. Grimes with wide-open eyes.

Where he had looked for certain failure success had come.

"You will help me organize the company!" he repeated, scarcely knowing what he said.

Mr. Grimes smiled.

The situation was so absurd that he could scarcely keep back a laugh.

Here was he, the great Grimes, the king of the cartridge trust, the owner of a hundred patents, every one of them the outcome of the brains of some poor skilful fool who had come to him for "help to organize a company," and who had been "frozen out" just as quick as the law would allow.

Facing him was our hero, the simple country youth who had come for "help to organize," and who believed in him. Who actually believed that there would be something left for himself after the organization was complete.

Really the situation was too absurd.

Perhaps Joe's trusting confidence may have made the great Grimes feel just a little bit ashamed of himself, we cannot say, but even that would not have prevented the boy from being swallowed up as every other brainy, hustling pauper had been who had ever dealt with this man.

Nevertheless, Joe was already slated to win, and the reason was many sided.

First and foremost, Jacob Grimes had long been desirous of getting a foothold in the firearms market.

Second, Jacob Grimes hated P. H. Dodger with a deadly hatred, and had long been laying for a chance to crowd him to the wall.

Third, Jacob Grimes knew what the leather man had been in the past, and knew that if his reason was now restored, and he could be lassoed, corralled and brought into the fold, that he would be a most valuable asset in more senses than one.

Such were the thoughts which ran through the brain of the cartridge king, and which induced him to say to Joe in his blandest and most assuring tone:

"Why, yes, my boy, I will help you organize your company. I consider the idea an excellent one. Now just tell me all about it. Talk to me with as much confidence as you would to your father—see?"

And Joe opened up his heart.

Oh, that wily leather man!

Hermit, madman, he may have been, but he certainly knew the world!

He also knew Grimes.

Perhaps that was the reason why he suggested the scheme of interesting the workingmen of Reddington in the new company, to the extent of a few shares of stock.

For this was Grimes's pet scheme, and was in practise at each of his factories.

It kept the men in good humor, and helped to avoid strikes and labor troubles.

Grimes firmly believed in it. He complimented Joe upon having suggested it, while Joe, in his honesty, gave all the credit to the leather man.

And it ended in Mr. Grimes saying:

"Now, my boy, you can tell Colonel Redding that if Mr. Noble will put up \$50,000 towards organizing a new company to take over the Wapamsett works, I will go him one better and subscribe double that amount. If he wants it in writing, he gets it—see? You go ahead and see Mr. Henshaw. He is a man who, although practically out of business, is still ever on the lookout for a chance to make good investments. I will telephone him that you are coming, and explain who you are and what you want, which will make it all plain sailing for you. I have little doubt that you will be able to enlist his sympathies in your enterprise, but you must see Noble again, too, and try to make him come in on equal terms with the rest of us. Don't fail to look in on me again before you leave town."

And so Joe left the offices of Jacob Grimes in triumph.

Shall we excuse him for believing that the remarkable success he had made was due to his own hustling?

We shall have to.

But Joe might have hustled till the cows came home with these New York financiers and never even got a sight of one of them had the situation been otherwise than just what it was.

(To be continued.)

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

SUGAR ECONOMY BY BOTTLERS.

If each of the 10,000 bottlers in the United States can find a way to save just 1 ounce of sugar a day, says the American Bottler, it will mean a saving of 195,000 pounds a year. Bottlers can save sugar by eliminating waste in their plants, such as dripping faucets in the sirup room, extravagant use of sirup and sugar in their formulas, and other losses.

MESOPOTAMIA'S HOT SPELL.

A report from Bagdad states that this has been the hottest season in Mesopotamia of which record exists. The highest temperature at Bagdad was 122.8 in July, and at Basrah 122, while in the tents of the soldiers the thermometer rose to 10 degrees higher. This was 10 to 12 degrees higher than in 1916. August was also severely hot, and September opened with a heat wave which drove the thermometer to an average of 8 degrees above normal. The mercury at Basrah on August 28 was 118, and on September 5 was 116 in a damp atmosphere.

In spite of the abnormal conditions the spirit of the troops has been excellent, and in the hottest weather sports have been enjoyed as usual. Early in June a football cup series was played at Samarah. The first week of September was marked by a regatta and race meeting at Bagdad and a large number of men are now in training for a big boxing tournament.

MILLIONS LEFT HOMELESS BY FLOODS.

In a two weeks' boat and overland tour of the flooded sections in Shantung, and Chihli provinces, an Associated Press correspondent found that the breaks in the banks of the Yellow River were comparatively unimportant and contribute only slightly to the torrent in the Grand Canal which keeps Tientsin under water.

There has been great loss of life, especially among the old, small-footed women, who could not reach the highlands.

At least 1,000,000 persons are homeless and penniless, and probably 25,000 square miles of territory has been devastated.

The work animals have been drowned, sold or eaten.

The rains for six weeks have been the heaviest in fifty years.

Whole families were seen dragging ploughs and trying to plant winter wheat on the dry knolls.

The American Red Cross is putting up huts for 5,000 refugees.

BEAR GOT ALL CAMP'S HAM.

With hams at present prices even a rich corporation like the Great Northern Paper Company cannot afford to feed bears on that sort of fodder, and so

it was a distinct relief to the boss of the company's camp on Elm stream, nine miles from Seeboomook Falls, when the camp timekeeper, Raymond Dyer of Bangor, acted.

In the camp on Elm stream was a barrel of smoked hams. September 23 the barrel was full. The morning of October 1 the barrel was harmless, the cook found. Tracks of a young bear were around the building.

Dyer set a trap. One morning at three o'clock the crew were aroused by a tremendous grunting and thrashing. The ham thief was in the trap, fat, furry and furious, securely pinched by his right fore paw. A logger smashed the bear's skull with an ax. The men ate some of the bear meat and Dyer got the skin, which he sold for a good price in Bangor, and also collected the State bounty, five dollars, from City Clerk Victor Brett.

RAILROAD CAR COLLEGE.

Apprentices in the shops of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad are given an opportunity for self-improvement in a day coach refitted to serve as a classroom by the company. Light and heat are furnished as well, and the corporation even goes so far as to pay the boys wages for a portion of the time they spend in this novel school.

The Department of Education of New York is interested in this plan to the extent of paying the salaries of two instructors, one for the course in mathematics, the other for mechanical drawing, as these subjects form the curriculum of the school in the railroad car, writes C. D. Edholm in St. Nicholas.

In order to afford the apprentices some free time, the classes are held on three days only, a total of six hours each week, and the interest of the young fellows is held by the fact that instruction is given to each according to the task in which he is engaged in the shops. Thus the pupils were drawn from shops where they worked as machinists, boiler-makers, tinsmiths, painters and carpenters, and the problems given them in class were of the sort that they would have to solve in everyday work. The mechanical drawings were allotted on the same plan; the machinists were set to draughting parts of engines and tools, the tinsmiths were given diagrams of elbows and rivet joints, and so on through the different trades.

This vocational training of a specialized nature is of direct benefit to the ambitious young men who desire to get ahead in their crafts even though they began work before the regular school course was far advanced. Some of them did not get farther than the seventh grade, and should be severely handicapped as skilled mechanics without such theoretical training as they receive in the "railroad college."

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

HORSE MEAT 10C A POUND IN CINCINNATI.

Horse meat now is an officially approved war economy diet here. It is being readily sold at Cincinnati's first-class butcher shops, according to the report of the Pioneer Dealers.

Twenty old Dobbins, halt and lame, were turned into sausage and steaks which sold at 10 cents a pound.

Fred Frey, a firm dealing exclusively in horse meat, said that as long as he could buy old horses at \$40 each, as at present, he would continue to sell meat at the present prices. Horses at \$40 each produce the same quantity of steaks and sausage as steers costing \$100 each.

This city is declared to be the first American city to approve officially of horse meat.

STUDENTS PICK PRUNES.

Students of the Boise High School, Boise, Idaho, have earned \$329 in two days picking and packing prunes in orchards in the valley. The results for one day recently, as announced by Mac Hoke, in charge of the volunteers, show that 51 boys and 20 girls picked 350 boxes and packed 191 boxes of prunes, earning \$79. The students worked a total of 502 hours.

The following day 100 boys and 65 girls responded and picked about 1,200 boxes and packed 265, working about 1,200 hours. The total earnings were about \$250. Teams No. 5, No. 3 and No. 1, captained by Sam Coons, Searle Hosley and Volney Hoobing made the best showing.

The average pay for picking is 15 cents a box, although at some orchards 18 is paid. B. F. Hurst, at Manville station, has offered a bonus of \$2 each day for the best team.

SUBMARINE RESCUE.

One of the most dramatic and thrilling of the episodes of this war was the escape of a boatload of British seamen from a German cruiser in the naval battle off Helgoland. The British steamship Defender, having sunk a German craft, lowered a whaler to pick up the swimming survivors, says the Public Ledger. Before the task had been completed a German cruiser came up and chased the Defender, which thus had to abandon its small craft.

The men in the whaler were in a sad plight. Without food or water, in an open boat, twenty-five miles from land and that land a hostile one, with nothing but fog and foes surrounding them, they hardly knew which way to turn. Suddenly there was a swirl alongside, and up popped the British submarine E14, which opened its conning tower, took the occupants of the whaler on board, closed the opening, submerged, and sped homeward, 250 miles away.

WORST HURRICANE OF ALL SWEEPS GRAND CAYMAN ISLE.

The island of Grand Cayman, British West Indies, was visited recently by the most violent hurricane ever known there. Wind, which reached a velocity of 120 miles an hour, heavy rain and giant breakers from the sea, combined caused a property loss estimated at \$300,000, exclusive of shipping. A watchman on a vessel in the harbor was drowned and a woman was crushed to death in the ruins of her home.

Houses built to withstand the ordinary hurricane in the Caribbean were shaken to their foundations; 120 were blown down. Windows were shattered and doors and roofs carried away. The streets and roads were flooded and filled with uprooted trees.

Thirteen vessels were driven ashore, two were capsized and every one at anchor was damaged.

Grand Cayman, one of three British West Indian Isles, known as the Caymans, is about the size of Staten Island, lies some 200 miles south of Cuba and the same distance northwest of Jamaica.

ABOUT GUN COTTON.

Thirty thousand men are employed in one plant in Virginia making gun cotton.

Every entrance to the works is closely watched by armed guards. Every employe must show a pass when entering or leaving. Only twelve persons in the whole concern have authority to admit visitors. Each of these is required to accompany his guests while they are inside the plant and is held personally responsible for anything which may happen as a result of the visit.

At one end of the plant sulphur is made into sulphuric acid. At the other end the cotton is prepared. Then they are brought together. The "gun cotton," as the product is called, comes tumbling down long chutes in snowy masses.

At the bottom of each chute is a press. Into the press goes the cotton. Pressure is applied. A barrel full of cotton is compressed into about one cubic foot.

The visitor winces as the powerful press squeezes the deadly explosive. There are cars full of it standing on the tracks and more being loaded. What if it should "go off?"

But his fears are groundless. From the time the acid and the cotton are brought together the explosive is kept wet. Even after the press has squeezed it into compact cubes it contains twenty per cent of water. It is shipped in air-tight, lead-lined cases to prevent its drying.

Just before the cotton is loaded into shells at another plant, far away, the percentage of water is reduced. Not until then is there any possibility of it exploding.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 21, 1917.

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166 West 23d St., New York

Good Current News Articles

The biggest billiard plant in the world had its formal opening in Detroit, Mich., the other Saturday. It is the great Recreation Building, just constructed by the Sweeney-Huston Company, which will contain 105 billiard tables and 88 bowling alleys. Ora Morningstar, Clarence Jackson and Bert Kortlang are the leading professionals in charge of the various departments.

Ferncliffe, the country home of Vincent Astor at Rhinecliff, N. Y., overlooking the Hudson River, is to be converted temporarily by the War Department into a hospital for convalescent American soldiers who may be wounded in France. Vincent Astor, who inherited the estate from his father, Colonel John Jacob Astor, offered it to the Government for this purpose, and it has been inspected and approved by the Sanitary Corps of the Army Medical Department. It has also become known that other New York men have offered their country homes for the same purpose. One of these is M. Taylor Pyne, who has turned over his country home, Drumthwackett, near Princeton, and it too has been approved by the Sanitary Corps.

What are the canning kitchens in Nassau County, N. Y., going to do with the 20,000 cans and bottles of preserved vegetables and fruits? This was the question asked at the committee meeting of the community members at the Home Economics Department of the Nassau County Farm Bureau, held at the courthouse. The women of the county have been hard at work all summer and fall canning their surplus produce, and now that it is all ready for use by the government for shipment abroad, they naturally ask the question, "What are we to do with it?" Miss Olga Goehler, head of the department, has been deputed a committee of one to investigate this important matter and report to the committee on the methods to be employed in getting this rich supply of food to its proper destination. The cans and bottles are stored away, ready for distribution.

The Squantum Aviation Field, near Boston, Mass., will be the site of the greatest destroyer plant in the world, which will be built for the government by the Fore River Shipbuilding Corporation. It was declared in Washington that the plant would be nearing completion by the end of the year and that the unloading of the hundreds of thousands of tons of steel, which will be used in building forty-six of the largest, fastest and best-armed destroyers ever laid down, would begin to arrive at the plant not later than January 15 next. Ninety million dollars will be expended before the work is completed. Not only will the Fore River Company build the destroyer plant at Squantum, but it will erect a turbine plant at Buffalo, which will cost \$2,500,000 and will construct a boiler plant at Providence, to cost \$1,500,000. The destroyers' hulls will be built at Squantum. The boilers will be made at Providence, the turbines at Buffalo and will be shipped to Squantum as rapidly as completed.

Grins and Chuckles

"So Miss Passay is angry with her doctor. Why is that?" "He tactlessly remarked that he would soon have her looking her old self again."

Lawyer—Want a divorce, eh? On what grounds? Mose Possum—Incompracticability of temperamentality. I like to fish and she don't like to wash.

Master—Norah seems quite gone on that letter-carrier. Mistress—Gone! Why, she actually mails a postcard to herself every night, so he'll be sure to call at the house next morning.

"Well, John," the doctor said one morning, "what is your master's temperature this morning?" "Indeed, sir," replied the servant, "I should not like to say, sir. He died last night."

"I don't see why you call your place a bungalow," said Smith to his neighbor. "Well, if it isn't a bungalow, what is it?" said the neighbor. "The job was a bungle and I still owe for it."

Mother—I have just heard something that you ought to know. Your father tells me that your husband is hopelessly involved. Married Daughter—Isn't that lovely! Now, maybe, he'll make over all his property to me.

The head of a certain well-known family was recently approached by his son, just nearing his majority. "Father," said he, "I want to have a talk with you concerning my future. I have decided to become an artist. Have you any objections?" The old man scratched his head reflectively and replied: "Well, no, my son—provided, of course, you don't draw on me."

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

CHICAGO ENTERS POTATO BUSINESS.

The city is going into the wholesale potato business for the benefit of the poor. The City Council recently authorized the appointment of a board to which the city will loan \$200,000 to be invested in potatoes.

The spuds will be stored and the city will be guaranteed the return of its \$200,000 in nine months, plus 2 1-2 per cent. The guarantors are fifty wealthy citizens.

Potatoes can now be bought at primary points at 90 cents a bushel. The poor will pay about 95 cents a bushel, to cover cost of freight and distribution. The retail price now is \$1.56 a bushel.

\$2,500 LEFT A WOMAN.

Because she was the means of saving his life when a canoe overturned six years ago, Lloyd F. Vosburgh, whose will was made public at Greenboro, N. Y., recently, left to Mrs. William Loftis a \$2,500 legacy.

Mrs. Loftis, who was Miss Mirian Booth of Stony Point, lives in Lakeville. At Lake Ontario, in 1911, she saw Vosburgh fall out of a canoe. Swimming to his aid, she kept him afloat and landed him safely ashore.

His will, filed with Surrogate Hathaway at Greenboro, shuts his two sons off with \$5 each, and leaves the balance of the estate, \$35,000, divided equally between two nieces. Mrs. Loftis had not heard from Vosburgh since a week after the accident.

A GIANT TURTLE.

A gigantic turtle was landed at Yokohama on August 1 by Japanese fishermen. The turtle was said to be fully 1,000 years old and weighed 600 pounds. A showman offered to give \$5 for the prize; but another purchaser appeared willing to pay half a dollar more, and was about to take away the turtle when a Chinese tailor, Ah Long, appeared. He promptly offered \$50 and bought it for \$55. After a ceremony, in which the turtle was given several bowls of sake, Ah Long, accompanied by friends, boarded two sampans, and, after carrying the turtle many miles to sea, released it with a blessing.

The Chinese have a belief that by setting turtles free they will be blessed of heaven. The turtle measured 6 feet from head to tail and 5 feet across its shell. Its head was 15 inches in circumference.

WOMEN RACE FOR LIFE.

Bears are so numerous and bold in Maine this fall that the natives don't have to go to war to

get excitement. It is a popular belief that the bear fears the hum of civilization and instinctively avoids settlements, but like most popular beliefs, that one is subject to frequent upsets. One of these upsets occurred in the town of Milford, fifteen miles up the Penobscot from Bangor, the other day, when a bear described as "big as a cow" pursued Mrs. Alice McAllister and Mrs. Millie Powers, who were driving along the county highway on their return from Greenfield.

Mrs. Powers lashed the horse into its top speed to keep ahead of the fast loping bear, but at a turn in the road the front axle of their carriage broke, pitching them into the ditch.

In an instant the women were on their feet and freed the horse. They mounted the animal and rode at top speed. After a race of a mile or more they reached the Fred Allen place, but there was no one at home. They barred the doors and telephoned to the Tom Simmons farm for help. A dozen men were soon out after the bear, but no trace of him could be found.

FIRST U. S. NITRATE PLANTS.

Following the recent report of the nitrate board, the Secretary of War has authorized this announcement regarding the location of the government nitrate plant:

The Secretary of War announces that the President has approved the location at Sheffield, Ala., of the initial ammonia and nitric acid plants to be constructed with a portion of the \$20,000,000 appropriated for nitrate supply by the national defense act, providing a suitable site be there obtainable at a reasonable price. As satisfactory prices have now been agreed upon for the transfer of the several parcels of land involved, the location of these initial plants at Sheffield may now be regarded as assured.

Sheffield, Ala., is located on the Tennessee River just below the Muscle Shoals, and is near to the phosphate beds of central Tennessee. On the site selected there are several substantial steel buildings which can be utilized with a saving of expense and of time.

These initial plants were planned with a view to determining the best and most economical process of nitrogen fixation. Enough land is being acquired to permit of large expansion—by the same or by other processes—in case such expansion at the same place shall be decided upon.

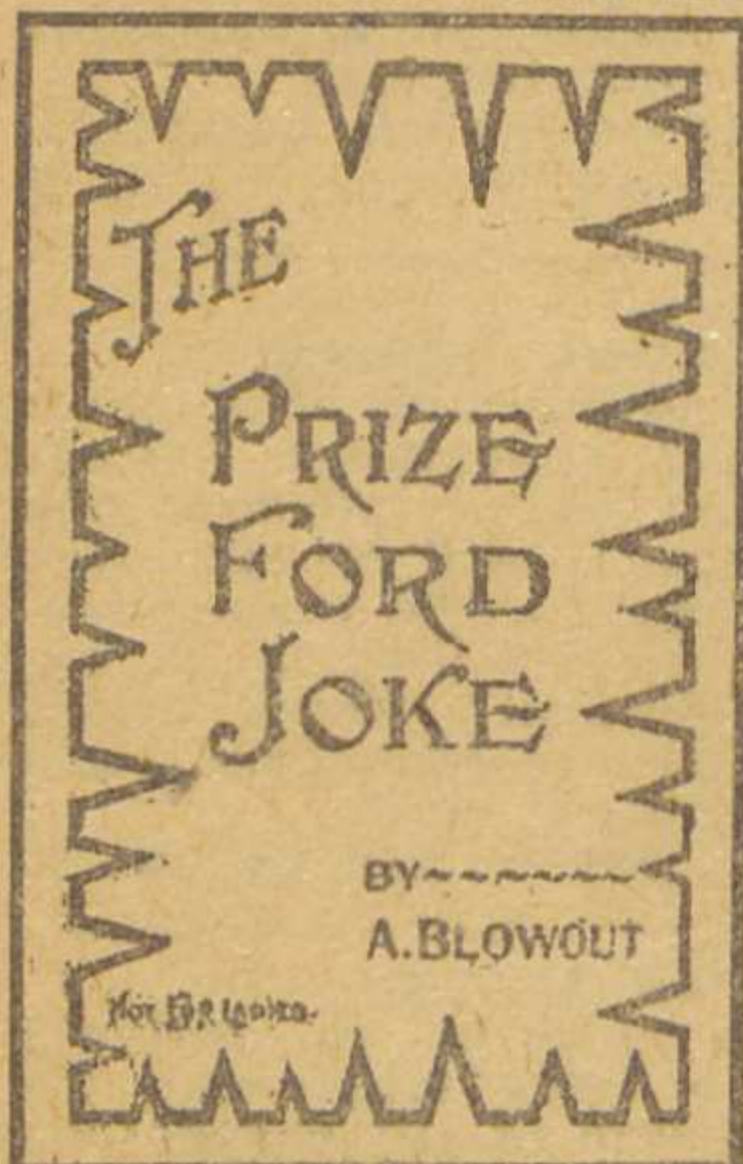
These plants will produce material of much value in the manufacture of munitions for the war. After the war any excess of their product over the munitions requirements may be sold for use in fertilizer.

LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.

The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE PRIZE FORD JOKE.



Looks like a story-book, but it contains a cap and a trigger. The moment your innocent friend opens the book to read the interesting story he expects—Pop! Bang! The explosion is harmless, but will make him think the Germans are after him. Price 35 cents each by mail, postpaid. Wolff Novelty Co. 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

BLACK-EYE JOKE.



New and amusing joker. The victim is told to hold the tube close to his eye so as to exclude all light from the back, and then to remove the tube until pictures appear in the center. In trying to locate the pictures he will receive the finest black-eye you ever saw. We furnish a small box of blackening preparation with each tube, so the joke can be used indefinitely. Those not in the trick will be caught every time. Absolutely harmless. Price by mail 15c. each; 2 for 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



MAGIC CARD BOX.—A very cleverly made box of exchanging or vanishing cards. In fact, any number of tricks of this character can be performed by it. A very necessary magical accessory. Price, 15c.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

WILLARD-JOHNSON PRIZE-FIGHT PUZZLE.



Four strips of cardboard, each three inches by one and a half inches, showing Willard and Johnson in various absurd postures. The solution in the puzzle lies in so arranging the strips that they show Willard in the complete picture, the heavy-weight champion. Price, 10c. by mail, postpaid, with directions.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

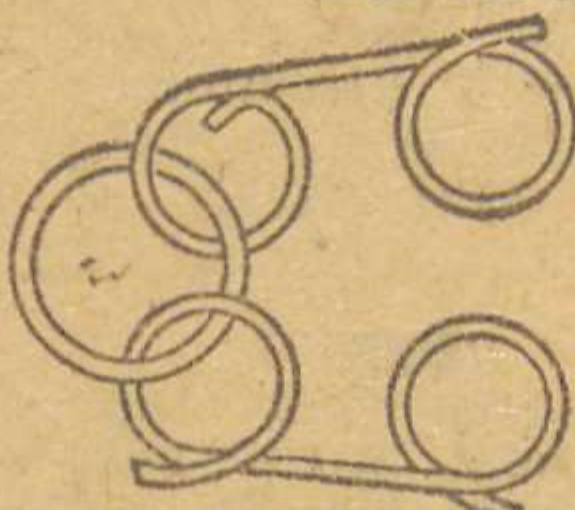
THE BALANCING BIRD.



It measures more than four inches from tip to tip of wings, and will balance perfectly on the tip of your finger nail, on the point of a lead pencil, or on any pointed instrument, only the tip of the bill resting on the nail or pencil point, the whole body of the bird being suspended in the air with nothing to rest on. It will not fall off unless shaken off. A great novelty. Wonderful, amusing and instructive.

Price 10 cents, mailed postpaid. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

DEVIL'S LOCK PUZZLE.



Without exception, this is the hardest one of all. And yet, if you have the directions you can very easily do it. It consists of a ring passed through two links on shafts. The shanks of this puzzle are always in the way. Get one and learn how to take the ring off. Price 15c. by mail, postpaid, with directions.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC PUZZLE KEYS.

Two keys interlocked in such a manner it seems impossible to separate them, but when learned it is easily done. Price 6c. by mail, postpaid. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

ELECTRIC CIGAR CASE.



This handsome cigar case appears to be filled with fine cigars. If your friend smokes ask him to have a cigar with you. As he reaches out for one the cigars, like a flash, instantly disappear into the case entirely out of sight, greatly to his surprise and astonishment. You can beg his pardon and state you thought there were some cigars left in the case. A slight pressure on sides of case causes the cigars to disappear as if by magic. By touching a wire at bottom of case the cigars instantly appear again in their proper position in the case. As real tobacco is used they are sure to deceive any one. It is one of the best practical jokes of the season. A novelty with which you can have lots of fun.

Price 35 cents, sent by parcel post, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., N. Y.

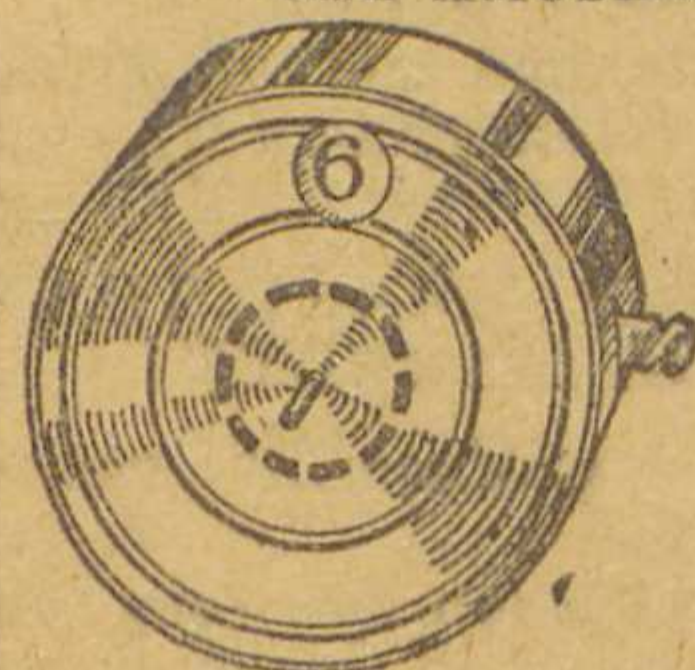
JAPANESE MAGIC PAPER.



The latest, greatest and best little trick perfected by the ingenious Japanese is called Yaka Hula. It consists of two packages of specially prepared paper, one a sensitized medium, and the other a developing medium. The process of manufacture is a secret. By wetting a white sheet, and pressing a pink sheet on top of it, the white sheet will develop quaint photographic scenes, such as landscapes of Japan, portraits of Japanese characters, pictures of peculiar buildings, Gods, temples, etc. These pictures are replicas of actual photographs, and print up in a beautiful sepia brown color. Intensely interesting for both old and young. Price, 12c. per package, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

THE AMUSEMENT WHEEL.



This handsome wheel, 7 1/2 inches in circumference, contains concealed numbers from 0 to 100. By spinning the wheel from the centerpost the numbers revolve rapidly, but only one appears at the circular opening when wheel stops spinning. It can be made to stop instantly by pressing the regulator at side. You can guess or bet on the number that will appear, the one getting the highest number winning. You might get 0, 5 or 100. Price, 15 cents; 3 for 40 cents, mailed, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

\$ 2 to \$500 EACH paid for hundreds of old Coins. Keep ALL money dated before 1895 and send Ten cents for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, size 4x7. It may mean your Fortune. CLARK COIN Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.



BOYS LOOK AT ME Do you want to know how to flirt, tell stories girls like to hear, write real love letters and be a dandy fellow with the girls? Write quick for Lovers Casket giving sample letters, and lots of other good things. All 10c. AMUSEU Co., 1945 Fremont Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

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CHRISTMAS CARD CO., Dept. R. Beverly, Mass.

RUBBER TACKS.



They come six in a box. A wonderful imitation of the real tack. Made of rubber. The box in which they come is the ordinary tack box. This is a great parlor entertainer and you can play a lot of tricks with the tacks. Place them in the palm of your hand, point upward. Then slap the other hand over the tacks and it will seem as if you are committing suicide. Or you can show the tacks and then put them in your mouth and chew them, making believe you have swallowed them. Your friends will think you are a magician. Then, again, you can exhibit the tacks and then quickly push one in your cheek or somebody else's cheek and they will shriek with fear. Absolutely harmless and a very practical and funny joke. Price, by mail, 10c. a box of six tacks; 3 for 25c., postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

GOLD PLATED COMBINATION SET.

Gold plated combination set, with turquoise stone. Price 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

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RUBBER SUCKER.



Rubber Vacuum Suckers

The latest novelty out! Dishes and plates will stick to the table, cups to the saucers like glue. Put one under a glass and then try to lift it. You can't. Lots of fun. Always put it on a smooth surface and wet the rubber. Many other tricks can be accomplished with this novelty.

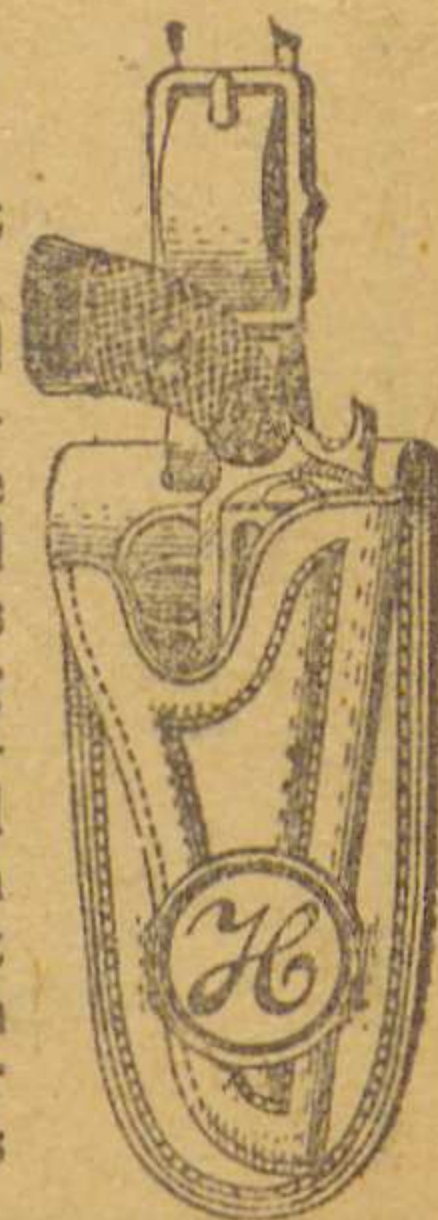
Price, 12 cts. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

GOOD LUCK GUN FOB.

The real western article carried by the cowboys. It is made of fine leather with a highly nicked buckle. The holster contains a metal gun, of the same pattern as those used by all the most famous scouts. Any boy wearing one of these fobs will attract attention. It will give him an air of western romance. The prettiest and most serviceable watch fob ever made. Send for one to-day. Price 20 cents each by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.

This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot. Price 15c, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

PAPEL BLANCO.

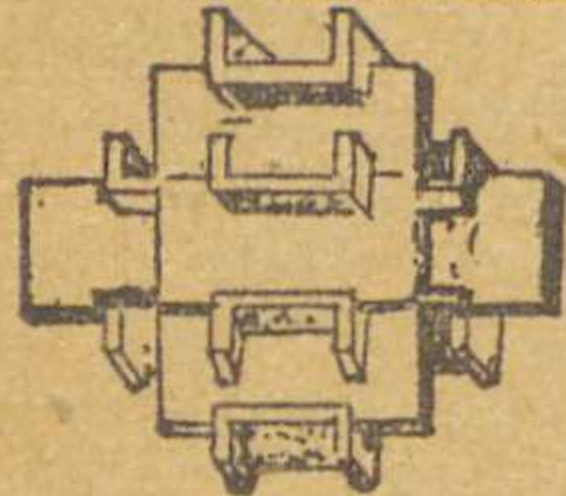


Four cards are placed in a hat. One card is removed and the balance are now shown to be changed to blank cards. The cards can be thoroughly examined.

Price 10c, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

JAPANESE BANK PUZZLE.



Built up of a large number of grooved pieces of wood. Very difficult to take apart, and very difficult to put together. It can be so dissected as to make a bank of it and when re-assembled would defy the most ingenious bank burglar outside of prison. Price 35c, by mail, postpaid.

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THE MODERN DANCERS.



These dancers are set in a gilt frame, the size of our engraving. By lighting a match and moving it in circular form at the back they can be made to dance furiously, the heat from the match warming them up. If you want to see an up-to-date tango dance send for this pretty charm.

Price, 15 cents, or 3

for 40 cents, sent by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

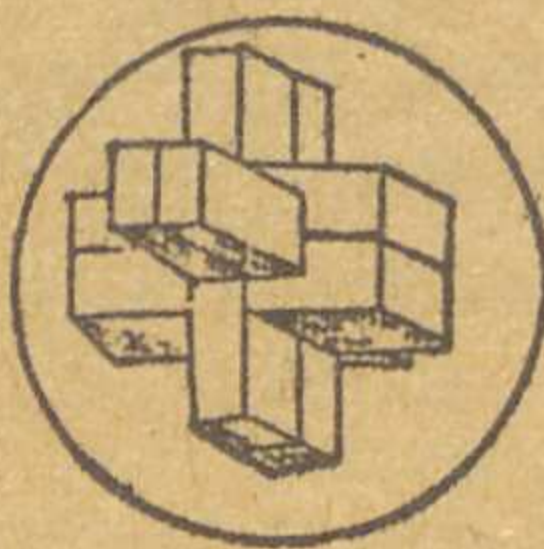


TOKIO CARD TRICK.

You place five cards in a hat. Remove one of them and then ask your audience how many remain. Upon examination the remaining four have vanished. A very clever trick. Price 10c, by mail, postpaid, with directions.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, New York City.

MIKADO BLOCK PUZZLE.



Imported from Japan. This neat little puzzle consists of six strangely cut pieces of white wood unassembled. The trick is to so assemble the blocks as to form a six-point cross. Price 12c, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



MONGOL PLAYING CARDS.

An exact imitation of a pack of the finest quality playing cards in a very neat case. You hand the package to your friend, requesting him to shuffle the cards, and as he attempts to do so a cap inside explodes loud enough to make him see stars. Price 25c, by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

IMITATION BED BUGS.

This toy is an exact imitation of the friendly little fellow who shares your bed, eats out of your hand or leg and who accepts your humble hospitality even without an invitation. The fact that he also insists on introducing all his friends and family circle, sometimes makes him most unpopular with the ladies; most every woman you know would have seven kinds of fits if she saw two, or even one, of these imitations on her bedspread. Six are contained in a transparent envelope. Price, 10c, by mail.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

IMITATION GIANT DIAMONDS.



Diamond rings or studs of half-inch and one-inch in diameter are heard of in stories only. We have them imitated by prodigious sparkling stones which will deceive the glance of any spectator. Price, by mail, postpaid, small size, 25c each; large size, 35c each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MAGIC MIRROR.



Fat and lean funny faces. By looking in these mirrors upright your features become narrow and elongated. Look into it sideways and your phiz broadens out in the most comical manner. Size 3 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches, in a handsome imitation morocco case.

Price, 10 cents each, postpaid.

WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

THE CREEPING MOUSE.

This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of a very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price, ten cents by mail.

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THE JOKE SPIKE.



This joke spike is an ordinary iron spike or very large nail, the same as is found in any carpenter's nail box. At the small end is a small steel needle, 1/2 inch in length, firmly set in spike. Take your friend's hat or coat and hang it on the wall by driving (with a hammer) the spike through it into the wall; the needle in spike will not injure the hat or garment, neither will it show on wall or wood where it has been driven. The deception is perfect, as the spike appears to have been driven half-way through the hat or coat, which can be left hanging on the wall.

Price, 10 cents, or 3 for 25 cents; by mail, postpaid.

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